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Replies to initial questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-25

Director of Bureau : Director of Administration
Session No. : 4

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSO023

(Question Serial No. 1286)

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operating expenses

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Mrs Millie NG)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

1. The number of users of the Public Records Office Search Room in 2023.
2. Did the Government procure any archival records relating to the history of Hong Kong from other places in 2023-24? If so, please provide the contents of the records and the expenditure involved. Also, please provide the estimated expenditure of the Government for procuring archival records relating to the history of Hong Kong from other places in 2024-25.
3. What are the specific publicity activities to be organised by the Government in 2024-25 to strengthen public education and publicity on Hong Kong's documentary heritage?

Asked by: Hon MA Fung-kwok (LegCo internal reference no.: 25)

Reply:

1. The number of users of the Public Records Office Search Room in 2023 was 6 085.
2. Over the years, the Government Records Service (GRS) has been procuring copies of suitable archival records relating to Hong Kong from other archives (for example, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) and The First Historical Archives of China) to enrich its holdings. In 2023-24, the GRS procured 46 items of archival records relating to Hong Kong from TNA, incurring about \$68,000. These records are related to the history of Hong Kong from the 1870s to the 1940s, with subjects ranging from Hong Kong's general situation, administrative issues, trade development, etc. These records are subject to quality checking, arrangement and description by the GRS and are expected to be available for public inspection in 2024.

To enrich its holdings, the GRS has earmarked \$100,000 in 2024-25 for the procurement of copies of archival records relating to Hong Kong from the archival institutes of other places.

3. The GRS organises exhibitions, seminars, workshops, group visits and other educational activities regularly to promote the documentary heritage of Hong Kong. Details of the GRS' public education and publicity programmes scheduled for 2024-25 are set out below:
- (a) organise about 30 onsite or online group visits to the GRS with an estimated number of more than 2 000 participants;
 - (b) conduct about 5 onsite or online educational talks or workshops for teachers and students, facilitating them to use the archival records kept by the GRS to conduct researches on Hong Kong's development in different areas. The estimated number of participants in each onsite and online talk or workshop is 40 and 150 respectively;
 - (c) organise an annual thematic exhibition cum roving exhibitions and set up an online Resources Page to help the public better understand, appreciate and utilise the local documentary heritage and archival records kept by the GRS;
 - (d) continue to enrich the online Educational Resources Portal to enable more people to view the archival holdings and information therein. Frequently used and popular holdings will be digitised for more convenient access; and
 - (e) continue to enrich the content of the Public Records Office Facebook page (fb.com/grs.publicrecordsoffice) to attract more online viewers to like, follow and share the page and posts, so as to strengthen connection and interaction with the public.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 3109)

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operating expenses

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Mrs Millie NG)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

According to the Government's existing records management system, if members of the public apply to the Government Records Service (GRS) for access to government records of less than 30 years old, the GRS has to deliver the master copies of the relevant government records to the government departments to which the government records originally belonged. The departments concerned will, having regard to the confidentiality, personal privacy, etc., examine and decide whether those records or only part of the records will be disclosed to members of the public who submit the applications.

What are the numbers of applications submitted by members of the public for access to government records of less than 30 years old in 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively? Among those applications, what were the largest number and average number of government records requested? What were the average time and costs (including the costs for the delivery of records between the GRS and the relevant government departments, as well as the manpower and expenditure involved in handling the applications) of the GRS and the relevant government departments for handling the applications? Also, what were the numbers of members of the public who had submitted the applications but did not turn up to inspect the records requested at the GRS as scheduled?

Asked by: Hon WONG Chun-sek, Edmund (LegCo internal reference no.: 54)

Reply:

According to the existing requirements of the Government Records Service (GRS), members of the public may apply to access up to 20 archival records of less than 30 years old each time. In 2022-23 and 2023-24 (as at 29 February 2024), the GRS received 152 and 115 of such applications respectively, and the average number of archival records requested in each application was 3.3 and 3.2 respectively. Among them, the numbers of applications in which the applicants did not turn up to inspect the archival records approved for access were 13 and 18 respectively.

As the staff of the GRS who handled the relevant applications were also responsible for other duties, the GRS does not have the data on the time or manpower costs involved in handling the applications. The relevant delivery costs were also subsumed under GRS' daily operating costs. Furthermore, the GRS does not have the information regarding the numbers of staff, their ranks and hours of work involved in handling the applications, nor the delivery costs of other bureaux/departments, and thus is unable to provide these data.

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