

# Annual Report 2019



**Government Records Service**

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

*Today's Records are  
Tomorrow's Archives*

# VISION

To be the leading, most insightful and resourceful public archives in Hong Kong that excels in preserving and promoting the documentary heritage of our city in the digital era.

## MISSION

- To build comprehensive and diversified archival collections;
- To provide user-friendly and convenient access to the archival collections;
- To build a digital archive with modern technologies;
- To promote good records management practices among government B/Ds and public organisations;
- To provide advanced facilities for storage, preservation and retrieval services;
- To promote awareness, appreciation and proper use of documentary heritage in our community; and
- To foster a closer partnership with other archives.

## VALUES

### *G*reen

Go Green! Be environmentally conscious through developing and promoting electronic records management in the Government and public organisations.

### *R*eliability

Create and preserve reliable records to support evidence-based decisions and to promote the documentary heritage of Hong Kong.

### *E*fficiency

Be efficient in all aspects of records management.

### *A*ccessibility

Enhance public access to our archival collections.

### *T*ransparency

Be transparent – making our Government more open and accountable through good records management practices.

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# Foreword

I am glad to present the 2019 Annual Report of the Government Records Service (GRS) to you.

2019 is a fruitful year for GRS, during which we continued to make every endeavour to strengthen the management, protection and preservation of government records and archives, thereby enriching Hong Kong's documentary heritage. GRS aspires to be at the forefront of preservation and protection of archival heritage, to explore new frontiers of records management, and to stay abreast with the times especially in this new digital era so that we can meet the growing expectations of the local community and evolve with the advancement in technology. To follow up the new initiatives announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address Supplement in October 2019, GRS has formulated comprehensive work plans for rolling out electronic recordkeeping systems to all government bureaux and departments (B/Ds) in phases by 2025 in order to enhance efficiency in preserving and managing government records. We have also developed a service-wide far-reaching training plan for government officers, with emphasis on the new recruits, with a view to instilling in them a sense of responsibility in records management and cultivating good records management culture in the workplace.



In addition, GRS has embarked on a full-scale Disposal Authority (DA) Review Exercise in 2019 to review B/Ds' DAs with the aims to strengthen the role of DA in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the records management work in the Government, to prepare B/Ds to address the challenging transformation towards a digital era and to ensure timely transfer of archival records from B/Ds to GRS. While the public consultation on archives law launched by the Archives Law Sub-committee of the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong was completed in March 2019 and the analysis of the public responses has been in progress, GRS also continued to promote the understanding about the subject among B/Ds and public organisations.

In 2019, GRS became an Executive Board Member of the East Asian Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (EASTICA), which predominately aims to establish, maintain and strengthen relations among archival institutions in the region. Through the EASTICA's network, we will reach out to the international archival community, strengthen our ties with archives outside Hong Kong, and enhance professional exchange on archival knowledge.

We hope that this report will bring you on a journey to some interesting aspects of our work, imminent challenges we face, our achievements in the past year as well as our projects for the years ahead so that you can have a better understanding of the archives landscape in Hong Kong.

Miss Ruby LUK  
Government Records Service Director



# Part I

## Activities in Retrospect







Play facilities for children in Tuen Mun (1983) extracted from Hong Kong Annual Report, 1984 (Reference no.: X1000137)



# Pleasure and Leisure: A Glimpse of Children's Pastimes in Hong Kong

How we enjoyed our leisure time in our childhood are fond memories for the grown-ups. The thematic exhibition **“Pleasure and Leisure: A Glimpse of Children's Pastimes in Hong Kong”** held from February 2019 to January 2020 showcased how children spent their leisure time in the old days, as well as how toys and games, recreational facilities and community activities catering for children evolved from the 1950s to the 1980s through the Public Records Office (PRO)'s historical photographs, audio-visual materials and government archival records.

The “baby boom” after World War II had resulted in the soar increase of child population in the 1950s to 1960s in Hong Kong. As revealed by our archival holdings, the number of children aged 17 or below stood close to 1.5 million, accounting for 40% of the Hong Kong's total population as at 1966. The exhibition showcased the simple games and playthings made by children out of

anything handy at the time when Hong Kong was yet to be affluent. It also demonstrated the development of recreational venues and community activities which addressed the increasing demand for child services and leisure facilities in Hong Kong, especially from the 1960s when more resources were made available by Hong Kong's economic growth.

## Highlights of the Exhibition

The exhibition presented photographs of libraries, mobile libraries, rooftop playing areas, playgrounds and swimming pools where children spent their spare time, as well as Christmas party, residential camping and activities organised by community centres such as mobile film screening. While immersing in childhood joy, visitors of the exhibition were also able to understand more about the transformation of Hong Kong's society and livelihood in those years.



Play facilities in a playground of Wah Fu Estate (1968) (Reference no.: HKRS365-1-303-3)



Children playing handbells at the Hong Kong Schools Music Festival (1963) (Reference no.: HKRS365-1-107-4)



Rooftop became play area (1965) (Reference no.: HKRS365-1-177-6)

The historical photographs displayed in the exhibition were mainly dug out from archival records transferred from the Information Services Department, the then City and New Territories Administration, the Home Affairs Department, and the Social Welfare Department. The content of the exhibition was enriched by the Hong Kong Museum of History and local toy collectors, who generously allowed their precious toy collections to be displayed in turn during the exhibition period.

The PRO had for the first time combined an exhibition with two public engagement programmes, namely “Childlike Innocence on Camera” and “Share the Joy”, inviting members of the public to contribute photographs taken from the 1950s to the 1980s that depict their childhood play times and toys popular during that period. Through the public engagement programmes, we had collected 39 photographs and 50 toys, which helped complete the exhibition as a collage of fond memories of fun childhood times that are unique to each and every person. To facilitate visits to the exhibition, four roving exhibitions were also held in branches of the Hong Kong Public Library in various districts.



Display panels of “Childlike Innocence on Camera” at the Search Room of Hong Kong Public Records Building



Toys collected under the public engagement programme – “Share the Joy”

# Stories of the City

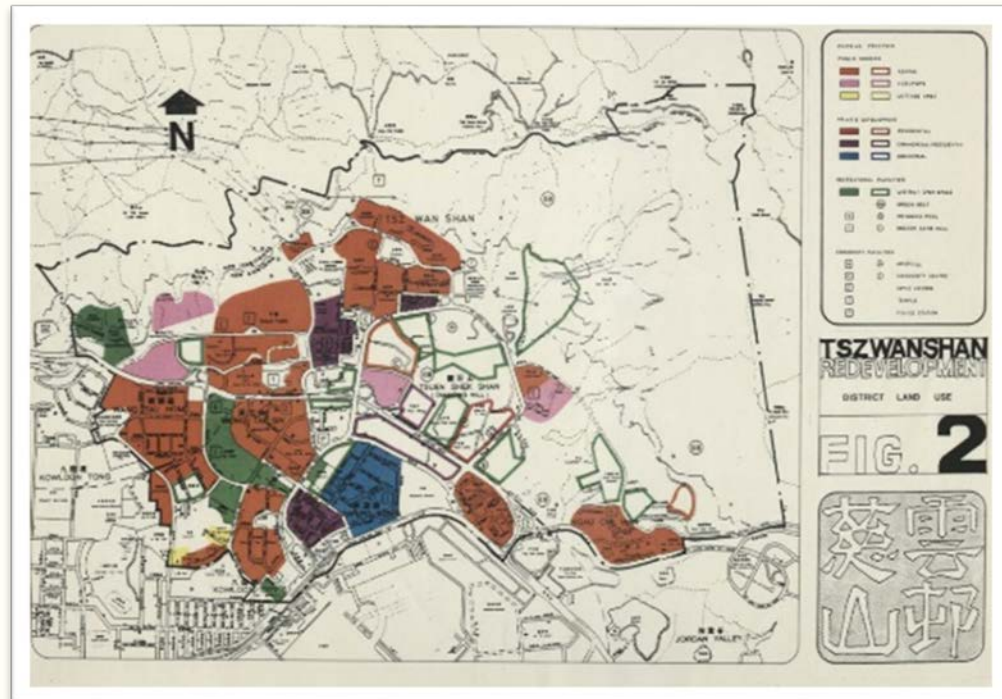
## *Revisiting Community Development*

The dramatic changes in the outlook of Hong Kong reflects the social and economic developments since the 1950s. These changes which have become people's collective memory are documented in our archival records. In particular, the newly opened archival records definitely throw some light on the community development in Kowloon side of the city.

### **Redevelopment of Tsz Wan Shan**

Among other things, the archival records about the redevelopment of Tsz Wan Shan group of housing estates demonstrate how the Government's redevelopment programme improved the residents' living conditions. Following the conversion of Marks I and II types resettlement estates into self-contained units as part of the ten-year housing programme announced in 1972, the Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme was introduced in 1988 to redevelop the Marks III to VI types resettlement estates, which included the 63 blocks in Tsz Wan Shan built between 1964 and 1971 by the then Resettlement Department. The archival records, which contain documents, maps and plans, reveal that the aim of the Tsz Wan Shan redevelopment was to relieve the

overcrowding situation in the estates with over 100 000 residents in 1986 as well as to improve the environmental conditions. The redevelopment programme involved a wide range of matters apart from housing accommodation. Roads, drains, traffic, open space and recreation, retail provision as well as education and community facilities were also taken into account while planning the redevelopment of the area. As participation of various departments was necessary, agenda and minutes of interdepartmental meetings were included in the records, showing the joint efforts across the Government to improve people's living standards.



Tsz Wan Shan Redevelopment Plan



## Landscapes of Sham Shui Po

To most people, Sham Shui Po is an aged district. Many of them go to Sham Shui Po just to buy fabric or electrical products. With the photos of Sham Shui Po in the late 1980s dug out from the newly released records, one can review the dramatic changes in the appearance of the district, such as buildings, streetscapes and everyday life of the local community decades ago.



Hawkers ran their stalls in Nam Cheong Street in the 1960s which was later developed as squatter huts. Due to environmental problems and fire hazards caused, the Government cleared the squatter huts in the 1980s and turned the site into the Nam Cheong Street Sitting-out Area.



The North Kowloon Magistracy was built to mainly deal with cases from Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Shek Kip Mei, Cheung Sha Wan and Ho Man Tin Police Stations. Located at Tai Po Road, the seven-storey building was completed in 1960 and ceased to function as a magistracy in 2005.

*Past*



*Present*



The clock tower at Tai Po Road is part of the Sham Shui Po residents' collective memory. It has been replaced by a modern clock tower at the original location.



On the other hand, some of the landmarks, such as the Kwan Tai Temple at Hai Tan Street, the Tin Hau Temple at Yee Kuk Street, the street market at Pei Ho Street and the fabric market at Ki Lung Street, are still standing there. The history of the Kwan Tai Temple and the Tin Hau Temple can be dated back to a century ago, i.e. 1891 and 1901 respectively. The temples are still in operation under the management of the Chinese Temples Committee.



The street market at Pei Ho Street and the fabric market at Ki Lung Street also witnessed the commercial and industrial development of Sham Shui Po over decades. Members of the public are most welcome to come to PRO to inspect the newly released archival records to revisit the historical development of Hong Kong.

## RECORDS OPEN TO PUBLIC ACCESS

Access to archival records kept by the GRS is managed through the Public Records (Access) Rules 1996. In general, the public are allowed access to archival records which have been in existence for not less than 30 years or the contents of which have at any time been published. Where a transferring bureau/department (B/D) has reviewed that a record which has been over 30 years old but should not be opened for access due to its sensitivity in the interim, it is required to review the record again every five years until the record is eventually opened.

In 2019, **27 779** archival records were newly opened, making the total number of archival records open for public access **819 299**.

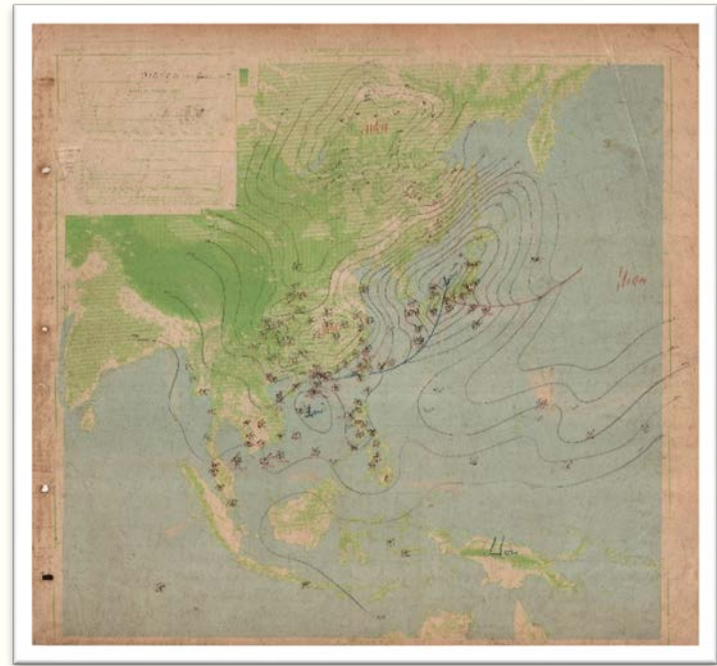
# To Discover the Hidden Treasures

## *Acquisition of Archival Records*

**R**ecords appraisal is the process of ascertaining the archival value of government records and GRS places much emphasis on this task. The Archivist grade officers are responsible for this challenging but rewarding job. GRS developed its appraisal guidelines based on the experience of and standards adopted by overseas jurisdictions to assist the Archivist grade officers to assess records holistically, select records based on consistent and systematic yardstick, and ultimately reach informed and justifiable appraisal decisions.

Following these guidelines, the Archivist grade officers conduct function and content analysis to appraise the archival values of records. These will be based on a record's primary value for B/Ds' core functions and secondary value to the wider community as a resource for historical research. Information about the records

creating agency, its administrative history, mandate, organisational structure and functions; business procedures and workflows documenting business process; and file classification scheme, file lists and metadata schema, etc. will usually be considered in the assessment. These appraisal criteria are underpinned by major archival principles which are comparable to those of the overseas jurisdictions. Working under this appraisal framework, GRS commits to carrying out thorough records appraisal by digging out records which best document the Government's major functions, decisions and actions process, as well as interaction between the Government and citizens, and preserving the records containing information that can enrich the public's understanding about the transformation of Hong Kong.



Weather Chart, 1949

In 2019, about 610 linear metres of records were appraised as having archival value and transferred to PRO for permanent retention. Some notable series include:

- Minutes and papers of the Executive Council from Chief Executive's Office
- Files relating to the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre from Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
- Files relating to greening, landscape and tree management from Development Bureau
- Files relating to anti-drug programmes and studies from Security Bureau
- Files relating to Harbour Area Treatment Scheme Stage 1 from Drainage Services Department
- Files relating to the environmental impact assessment on the development of Junk Bay in the 1980s from Environmental Protection Department
- Files and photos relating to the construction of the West Kowloon Expressway from Highways Department
- Files relating to the redevelopment of Shek Kip Mei Estate from Home Affairs Department
- Meteorological charts from Hong Kong Observatory
- Files relating to postal rate and service from Hongkong Post
- Files relating to the organisation of the former Resettlement Department and subsequent formation of Housing Department from Housing Department
- Files relating to the rehabilitation and employment services for people with disabilities from Labour Department
- Files relating to the planning and promotion of cultural activities and performing arts from Leisure and Cultural Services Department
- Files relating to the Western Harbour Crossing from Transport Department



Report, papers and plan on Junk Bay development (1980s)

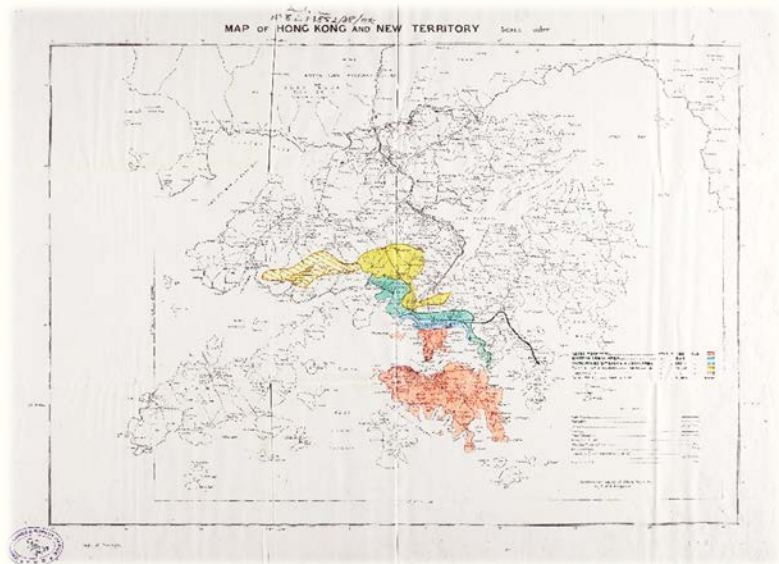


Improved uniforms for the former Resettlement Department's staff proposed by the Public Housing Officers' Association (1970s)



Photos of Hennessy Road as well as the Junction of Bonham Road and Hospital Road (1980s)

Apart from preserving archival records of the Government, GRS also makes efforts to enhance its existing archival holdings through acquiring copies of archival records relating to Hong Kong from overseas archives. GRS has an established mechanism to keep track of new releases of archival records relating to Hong Kong by The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) and other major overseas archives. When formulating the procurement plan for such archival records, GRS takes into account the development direction of its collections, criteria for appraising records, existing resources as well as the views of service users, in particular those of the academic and educational sectors, obtained through user surveys.



Urban development of Hong Kong in 1938

In 2019, GRS procured digital copies of 590 archival records relating to Hong Kong from TNA. These records are mainly related to the following subjects:

- Future of Hong Kong;
- Constitutional development;
- Sino-British Joint Declaration;
- Leading personalities in Hong Kong; and
- Hong Kong International Airport.

GRS also procured digital copies of 43 and 49 archival records relating to Hong Kong from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, and the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum respectively.



# Can it be read or not?

## The challenge in reviving the text in a document dated over a hundred years ago

Have you ever read a document with text barely visible? Out of curiosity, you may wonder whether any special chemical is needed to reveal the text. In GRS, we collect these kinds of holdings. In 2019, the Preservation Service Office (PSO) was requested to preserve and digitise a set of documents dated 1926<sup>1</sup>, with faded purple ink thereon (Photo 1). The ink was printed on a thin, glassine-like tissue paper<sup>2</sup>. In view of its fragility and the awkwardness to handle, the paper had been carefully glued onto a thick backing paper for ancillary

support before filing, which was an uncommon practice a hundred years ago. Surprisingly, the paper document has remained intact, without significant fragmentation or any small parts lost. Yet, the purple ink has faded over time, leading to illegibility of the content, meaning a missing message that may not be passed on. The lost text hobbles the way of reviewing and studying the information of a complete set of historical records, which the scholars are specifically looking for.



<sup>1</sup> HKRS58-1-138-77, collection of PRO, Title: Grant of a Site – Petition from Committee Members for the Sai Ying Pun Hakka Church to build a new church.

<sup>2</sup> Tissue paper is a lightweight paper or light crêpe paper: a kind of machine-made paper, with around 10-20gsm in weight. Its fibre is mostly made from recycled paper pulp.

Upon discussion with archivists, we decided to investigate the materials of the document in the hope of devising a non-destructive method, like making a secret recipe for a solution in ancient times, in order to reveal the invisible text and unlock the mystery behind.

To begin with, we inspected another set of documents <sup>3</sup> from the same government department and in similar period of time (Photo 2) - which has kept its vibrant purple ink. This was done under a microscope with a magnification power of 6x (Photo 3) and 40x (Photo 4). Eventually, we found that the colour is formed on the surface of the fibre of the paper support. It clearly indicates that the ink was printed on the thin substrate. Also, the paper is made of good quality pulp which has lasted for a long period of time without turning brown, yet the backing paper was aged.

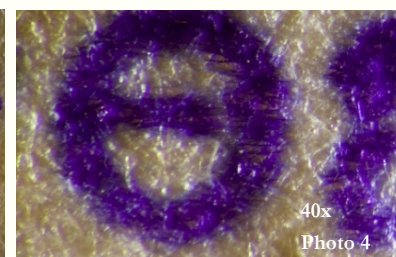


Photo 2  
HKRS58-1-138-65



6x

Photo 3



40x

Photo 4



Photo 5

If so, you may wonder why such thin paper had been used and presented. In the 1920s, people mainly relied on typewriting machines (invented in 1808, Photo 5) and carbon paper<sup>4</sup> in the office for making their records and copies until the invention of photocopier in the 1970s. It was a viable method for producing limited numbers of carbon copies of an original made from a typewriter. The thinner the paper, the more copies could be made at a time, yet the ink would get lighter and lighter with more copies made. There is therefore no doubt that the ultra-thin typing paper had been manufactured to

<sup>3</sup> HKRS58-1-138-65, collection of PRO, Title: Application from the Hong Kong Electricity Company for two areas, one at Garden Road and the other at Robinson Road as sub-stations

<sup>4</sup> Carbon paper is thin paper coated with a mixture of wax and pigment. It is used between two sheets of ordinary paper to make

one or more copies of an original document when it is typed. It was termed carbonated paper in 1806. (extracted from “The exciting history of Carbon Paper”, <http://www.kevinlaurence.net/essays/cc.php>)

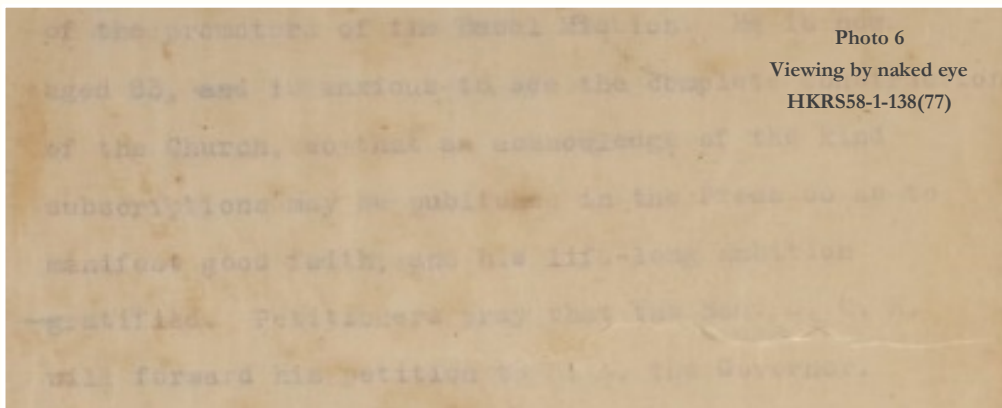


Photo 6  
Viewing by naked eye  
HKRS58-1-138(77)

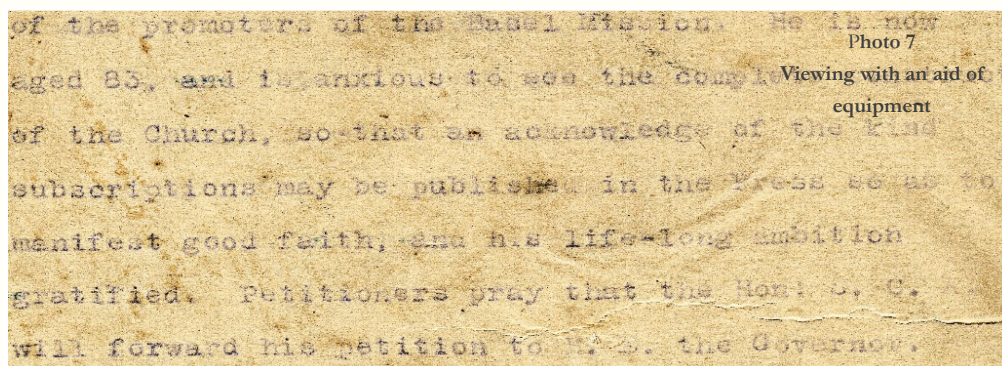


Photo 7  
Viewing with an aid of  
equipment

produce the optimal amount of copies for distribution. It explains why such unique and ultra-thin paper was found in these documents from the 1920s. In the trade, the carbon paper was usually coated with a waxy material, containing silicones incorporated with dye or pigment (D. Hart, 1956). In this document, a purple dye - methyl violet (Methyl Violet 6B, 2B or 10B)<sup>5</sup> - was probably used in accordance with other past records. Whether the methyl violet dye was actually utilised in this document, is pending further instrumental analysis for the identification of its organic composition<sup>6</sup>.

Having collected this background information, the following question is: how can we revive the text in this document? We therefore selected the technique of photography under the illumination of Ultraviolet light (UV), Visible light (VIS) and Infrared light (IR). Our conservator primarily captured a digital image of the original document at a high resolution<sup>7</sup> with a professional imaging system and specific setup in the studio under visible light. After the post-scanning processing, the text re-appeared clearly as shown in Photos 6 and 7.

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methyl\\_violet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methyl_violet)

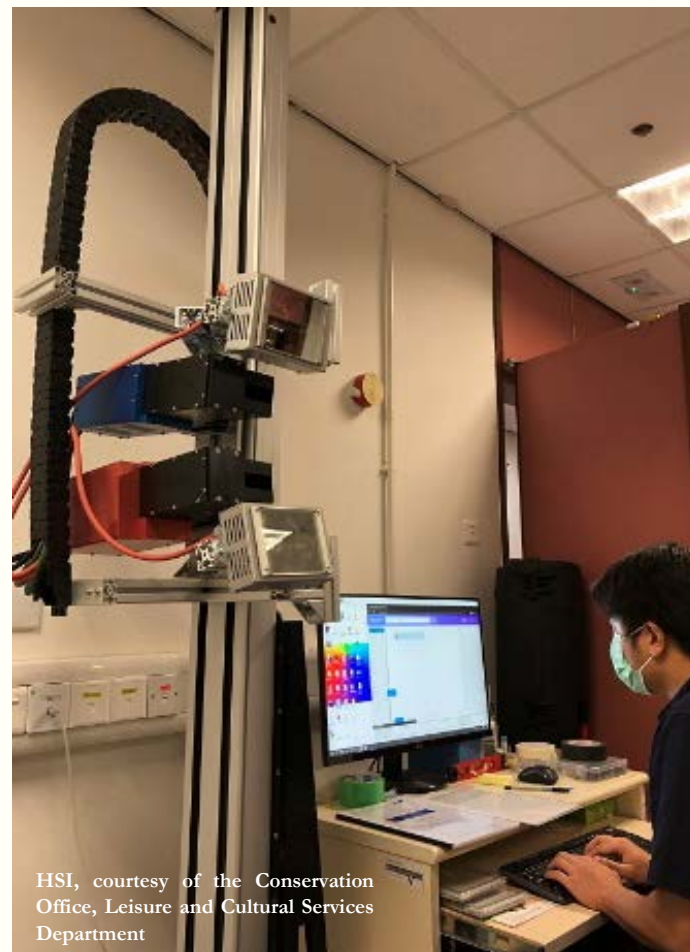
<sup>6</sup> "How carbon paper is made" (<http://www.madehow.com/Volume-1/Carbon-Paper.html>)

<sup>7</sup> Metadata of the scanning image: 300dpi width, 300dpi height, TIFF Format, Colour space: sRGB, Pixel height: 5792 and Pixel width: 8688



Nevertheless, not all the words in the entire document could be visibly displayed due to the limitations and constraints of the in-house equipment. We need more potent and innovative equipment to expose the fading text. Multispectral/Hyperspectral imaging (MSI/HSI) spectroscopy is one possible choice. It is useful in revealing ink or under-paint made of carbon-based pigments by UV/Vis/IR radiation, as well as exposing the composition of other dyes or pigments. By covering a wide range of the spectrum, from visible and near infrared (VNIR, 400-1000nm) to short wave infrared (SWIR – 930-2500nm), HSI can be used to characterise an object with different composition of materials, even in a trace amount.

GRS will be looking forward to collaborating with other government departments to explore the use of such spectral imaging techniques to reveal other hidden texts in our archives, in the hope of opening the treasure box of our archival records for appreciation by our readers and scholars. In the end, it is our goal to formulate a holistic strategic plan for the long-term preservation of our documentary heritage, in the form of digital preservation, as well as to prevent the sensitive components of our original archives from deterioration and damage.



# Digital Transformation Roadmap

Are you browsing our report online, viewing an electronic copy downloaded to your mobile device on the way home, or reading a hardcopy printout in the office? With the advance of information technology, we believe more and more readers prefer electronic copy to hardcopy. With an electronic copy, you can gain access to our Annual Report anywhere and anytime and use keywords to search for contents you want within seconds. There is also no need to worry about where to keep the hardcopy.

Similarly, it is more effective and efficient for the Government to manage records electronically.



## Electronic Recordkeeping System

We are pleased to let you know that the Government has decided to implement the electronic recordkeeping system (ERKS) service wide to enhance efficiency in preserving and managing government records. As announced in the Policy Address Supplement published in October 2019, the Government planned to roll out ERKS to all government B/Ds by 2025. GRS, in collaboration with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) and the Efficiency Office (EffO), has started the preparatory work for the full rollout.

ERKS is an information system with comprehensive records management functions to facilitate B/Ds to manage electronic and non-electronic records in an integrated and consistent way throughout the life cycle of records. After implementation of ERKS, there is

no need for B/Ds to print the email records out and file them into paper-based recordkeeping system.

What are the benefits for the Government to implement ERKS? It will be more environmental friendly as less and less paper form records will be generated for filing purpose. Government officers can directly capture emails or electronic documents into ERKS in a consistent and controlled way for future use. Retrieval of records in ERKS can be done through browsing the file plan or keyword search which enhances operational efficiency. Electronic records with archival value will also be available for access, retrieval and viewing electronically in the future.

Implementation of ERKS will bring about other profound changes to B/Ds including practices for records management as well as B/Ds' operations. GRS, OGCI and EffO stand ready to assist B/Ds in carrying out the preparatory work for ERKS implementation and facing the challenges ahead. In 2019, GRS organised 14 briefings attended by a total of 4 860 participants. These briefings included introduction of ERKS and preparation for ERKS implementation, planning and overview of ERKS



implementation, and review of records classification schemes.

### Preservation of Digital Records

Digital records are susceptible to the risk of becoming inaccessible, incomprehensible or loss to posterity due to rapid technology changes. To ensure that electronic records can be accessed in the future despite

technological advancement, GRS in 2019 commenced a consultancy study to develop governmental strategies, policies and guidelines for long-term preservation of electronic records with archival value. It also involves exploring ways to represent what the record was originally presented by a combination of software and hardware tools acting on data<sup>8</sup>. Proactive preservation activities such as technology watch, migration to new formats on time, adaptation of emulation approaches when necessary and management of metadata (i.e. supplementary information for describing electronic records) of the digital assets, etc. will be essential strategies<sup>9</sup> to tackle preservation challenges.

In addition, GRS has been setting up a digital repository for protecting and securely storing electronic archival records in the long run. Based on international standard and the best practices of other world renowned archive institutes, the digital

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<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Concept of Digital Preservation [website], <https://en.unesco.org/themes/information-preservation/digital-heritage/concept-digital-preservation>, (accessed on 22 July 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Digital Preservation Triad is composed of management, content and technology aspects in Edward M. Corrado and Heather Moulaison Sandy, *Digital Preservation in Libraries, Archives, and Museums*, Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

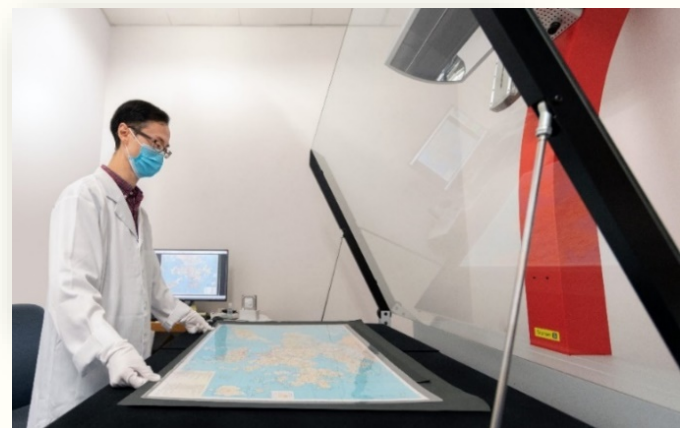
repository will follow the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model (ISO14721:2012)<sup>10</sup> to preserve information packages containing both record content and information describing the records. The repository can ensure all information in the electronic records maintains its authenticity and integrity through fixity check and audit trails. Electronic records will normally be stored in their original specific file formats for different types such as documents, images, sound, video, etc. and then migrated to new standard formats if necessary through active preservation monitoring in the repository system such that the archival records can be read correctly in future digital environment. Metadata is also an important part that will be preserved together permanently so that future users can easily identify and access those records stored in the repository system. With the digital repository, our technical capability to preserve the digital archival heritage will be increased considerably.

### Mass Digitisation of Archival Records

GRS also strives to better preserve our paper-based documentary heritage and provide an easily accessible means to facilitate their access through digitisation.

The ten-year Mass Digitisation Project (MDP) was first introduced in 2018, which aimed to convert the wealth of information of our archival records into digital data with the target of six million images for access and long-term preservation.

In 2019, GRS has enhanced its capacity on the MDP to meet the latest operational and preservation needs. We have been working relentlessly to refine our digitisation framework and streamline workflows, as well as acquire additional resources (such as additional manpower) and latest equipment (such as a set of calibration tools for scanning machines) to speed up the production of digitised archival records.



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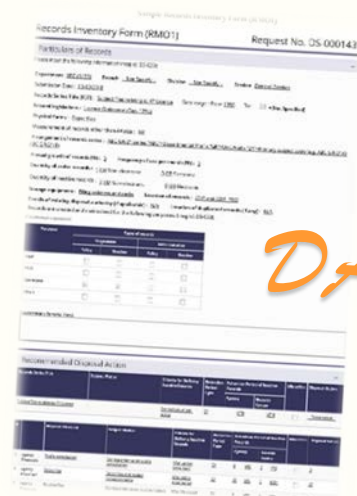
<sup>10</sup> The Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, *Reference Model for an OAIS*, Magenta Book, 2012, Issue 2, June 2012.

Available at <https://public.ccsds.org/Pubs/650x0m2.pdf>, (accessed on 22 July 2020).



# Insight into Disposal Authority Review Exercise

To identify records with archival value and plan for their preservation, records retention and disposal schedules, also known as disposal schedules, are an indispensable tool in the records and archives management field. Disposal schedule is a document listing the archival value of records by series or groups and their respective disposal timeframe having regard to the administrative, operational, fiscal and legal requirements and archival value of the records. GRS works with all B/Ds to establish the disposal schedules for their programme records (i.e. records about the unique functions and activities of each B/D). The approved disposal schedules of programme records are known as Disposal Authority (DA).

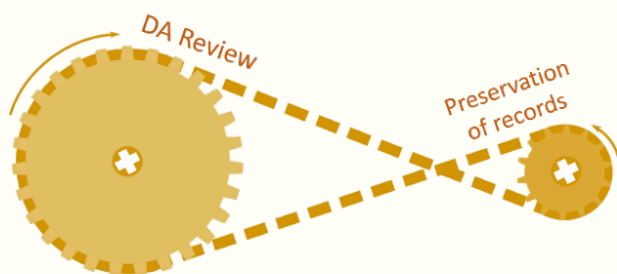


Reviewing B/D's disposal schedules and appraising their records are among the most important and challenging process at GRS. All along, PRO of GRS has conducted the first round of records appraisal at disposal schedule level when B/Ds propose to draw up one. At this juncture, some records groups will be identified as possessing potential archival value. A second appraisal will be conducted to determine whether the records under these groups warrant permanent retention in GRS when B/Ds do not have to refer to the records for their operational, fiscal, legal and administrative needs any more. This approach of appraisal is fit for paper records, but not for electronic records, which are

more susceptible to hardware and software obsolescence, and hence accessibility and preservation issues.

Amid the challenges posed by the widespread use of electronic records, GRS has embarked on a full-scale Disposal Authority Review Exercise (the Exercise) in 2019 to review B/Ds' DAs with a view to providing a definite disposal action for existing records. The

Exercise is a major GRS project meant to strengthen the role of DA in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the records management work in the Government and prepare B/Ds to address the challenging transformation towards a digital era.



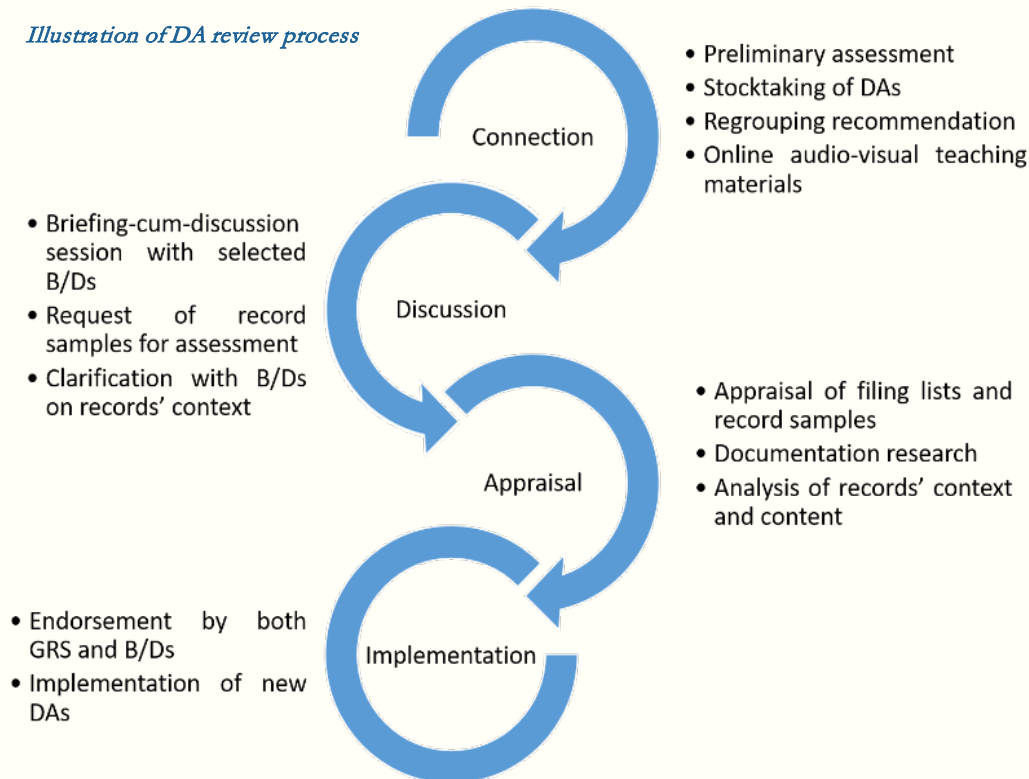
Taken on a government-wide basis, the Exercise involves the reassessment of DAs and the determination of the final and definite disposal action of the records concerned, which obviates the need for a second appraisal at the end of the records' lifecycle. Upon completion of the Exercise, whether a government record should be permanently retained by

GRS as archives or destroyed when time-expired will be specified in the DAs. The results will facilitate more timely and orderly transfer of records with archival value to GRS for proper preservation. Meanwhile, B/Ds are also informed about the value of their records, so that they can implement measures to protect the records with archival value, particularly the

electronic records which are susceptible to hardware and software obsolescence in the fast changing digital world. The records will not have to undergo a second appraisal and can be disposed of more efficiently when they become time-expired in future.

The records we create and manage today will become the archival records of tomorrow. GRS works closely with B/Ds and will continue with our efforts in enhancing our records management system and preserving our documentary heritage.

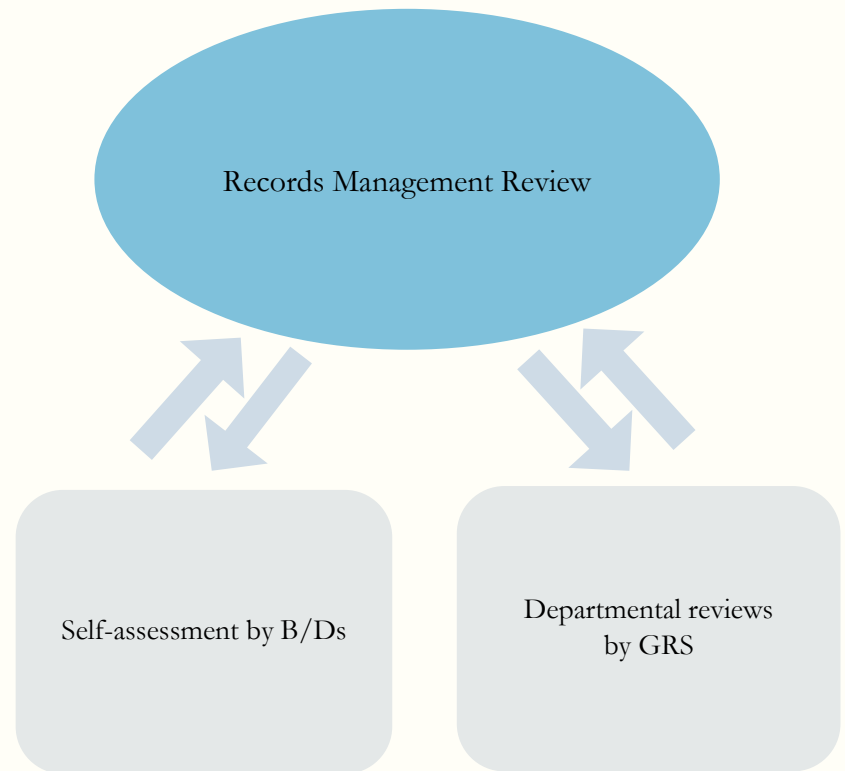
*Illustration of DA review process*



# Records Management Reviews

In the interest of continuous improvement and compliance monitoring, GRS has adopted a two-pronged approach to review the records management practices in B/Ds, which comprises self-assessment by B/Ds and departmental records management reviews conducted by GRS.

The self-assessment exercises provide an opportunity for B/Ds to reflect on their compliance with the mandatory records management requirements and adoption of other good practices. Based on B/D's self-assessment, GRS will have a comprehensive and updated picture on how B/Ds are doing, facilitating GRS to refine its records management strategies and identify potential problem areas that GRS should look into in future reviews. In 2019, GRS had analysed B/Ds' reports for the period covering 2016 to 2018. It was encouraging that more B/Ds have reported full compliance with GRS' mandatory requirements and there was a general improvement as compared to the results of the review conducted in 2015.





On item-wise basis, all B/Ds confirmed that they had:

- printed and filed e-mail records in official paper based files;
- put in place arrangements to ensure proper custody and storage of records;
- obtained GRS Director's prior agreement before transferring records to non-government bodies;
- ensured all new records classification schemes were approved by the Departmental Records Manager;
- categorised all records created according to the classification schemes; and
- transferred all time-expired records having archival value to GRS.

Yet, non-compliance with the mandatory requirements are still observed in some B/Ds. Those that are overlooked by some B/Ds include:

- not reviewing all time-expired records for disposal at least once every two years;
- not obtaining prior agreement from GRS Director before destruction of government records;
- not reviewing records classification schemes every two to three years; and
- not submitting draft disposal schedules to GRS within a period of two years for all new series of programme records.

GRS will closely monitor B/Ds' implementation of our recommendations by requiring them to submit half-yearly progress reports until completion of all rectification actions.

GRS has also been conducting departmental records management reviews (DRMR) for individual B/Ds to complement the self-assessment since 2012. These comprehensive and in-depth reviews cover all important aspects of records management practices of the B/Ds concerned and make recommendations for the B/Ds to improve their practices. In 2019, GRS conducted DRMR on the Government Laboratory and the Official Receiver's Office. While the inspection and analysis on Government Laboratory have been completed and some of the recommended improvement measures are highlighted below, the review on Official Receiver's Office is still underway. GRS will review its findings with these two Departments upon completion of the review reports and will closely monitor its follow-up until all the measures are put in place and the recommendations are effectively implemented.

### Improvement measures recommended for the Government Laboratory

- make sure the established business rules are reviewed at least once every two years and re-circulated to all staff concerned at least once every six months;
- review the classification schemes every two to three years and properly document the review conducted for future reference;
- adopt a systematic and uniform records tracking system to properly record file movement and conduct random checks regularly on the record inventory lists to ensure its accuracy;
- make immediate rectification to the storage of classified records to ensure better protection; and
- review the approved disposal schedules every five years and document the results at the Storage Allocation and Records Centre Information System.

# Archives Legislation Study

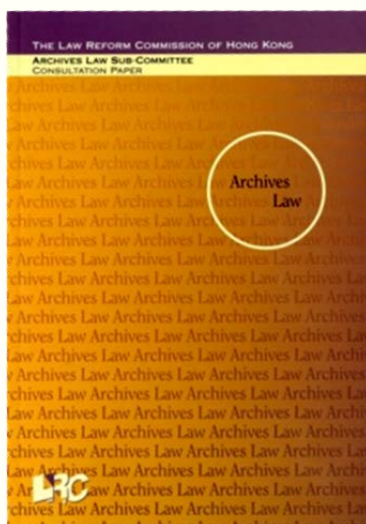
## In Search of the Future Archives and Records Management Regime

**L**egislation and Planning Office (LPO) was born in the Year 2019. We are a team of Archivist grade officers who devote to the study of archives law. Archives law has been a subject with increasing public concern in recent years, and GRS has been closely looking into it. The Law Reform Commission (LRC) of Hong Kong established an Archives Law Sub-committee in 2013 to kick-start the study into this subject. The Director of Administration is one of the members of the LRC's Archives Law Sub-committee. As stated in the Chief Executive's Policy Addresses, the Government would take follow-up action after receiving the report from LRC. In this connection, GRS underwent a re-organisation in January 2019 and established the LPO as a dedicated team responsible for supporting and following up the work relating to archives law.

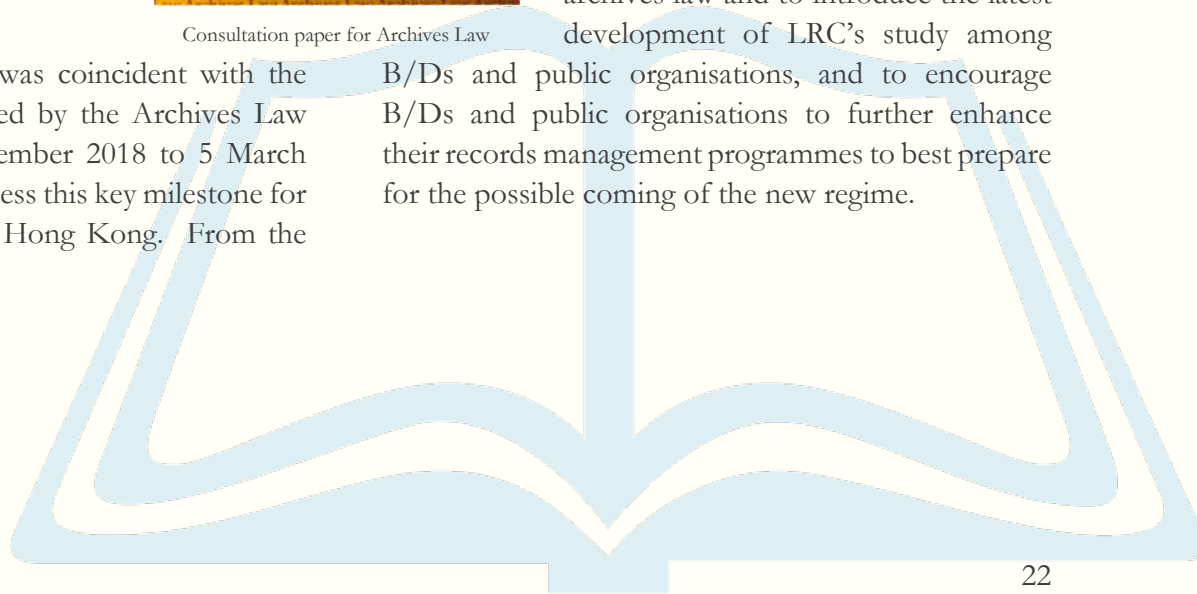
The establishment of LPO was coincident with the consultation exercise launched by the Archives Law Sub-committee from 6 December 2018 to 5 March 2019. We were happy to witness this key milestone for the study of archives law in Hong Kong. From the

media and various public occasions, we learnt that many different stakeholders including lawmakers, scholars, public bodies, professional associations and concerned groups actively participated in the consultation exercise and offered their valuable responses. In 2019, apart from our duties concerning research and planning on archives and records management, we provided the Director of Administration with support for her participation in the work of the LRC's Archives Law Sub-committee in examining and analysing all these public responses.

Meanwhile, we joined hands with other teams of the GRS, and held seminars and briefing sessions for B/Ds and public organisations in 2019. In particular, our focus was to promote the understanding about the subject of archives law and to introduce the latest development of LRC's study among B/Ds and public organisations, and to encourage B/Ds and public organisations to further enhance their records management programmes to best prepare for the possible coming of the new regime.



Consultation paper for Archives Law



# Young Archivists in GRS

## *New Members of the Team*

Though the Archivist grade is a small grade, it plays a core role in archives and records management in the Government. In the recent decade, GRS has implemented a number of records management initiatives and improvement works within the Government and a substantial increase in the establishment of the Archivist grade is required to cope with the enormous increase in service demands. **2019** is a significant year to our Archivist grade colleagues, we were so excited that **eight new Assistant Archivists** joined GRS and added up to **24 Archivist grade officers** in total as at 31 December 2019.

**A**ssistant Archivists of GRS need to possess a Bachelor degree in History, Political Science, Public Administration, Information Management and Library Studies, Archives and Records Management, or equivalent; and have two years' post-graduate research, study or training in History, Political Science, Public Administration, Information Management and Library Studies, Archives and Records Management, or equivalent. Our new recruits come from different backgrounds and possess various working experience including academic institutions, local archives and mass media. Now they have been posted in the PRO and LPO. Among those we welcomed aboard are **Mr Jason CHU (C)** and **Miss Jessie KONG (K)**, who now work in PRO and LPO respectively.



## Why did you enter into the profession of an archivist?

**C:** I was a frequent user of PRO service during my post-graduate programme of history. It led me to apply for the job once I knew that GRS was recruiting Assistant Archivists. As a user, I was impressed that the reference services were very up-to-date. The digital copy of records for users' access was really a great help and the copying service for various formats of archives allowed me to get a feel for the quality service.

**K:** I had used PRO service for quite a long time to conduct research before joining GRS. The helpful staff of PRO really left an impression on me. I also witnessed the upgrade of facilities in reference service and search room and I enjoyed reading archives in PRO. I therefore aspired to be an Assistant Archivist in GRS.

**GRS has an in-house training programme for new Assistant Archivists, covering different aspects of work of archives administration, such as records appraisal, records accessioning and description, reference services and access to archival records. Assistant Archivists have to try out different tasks during the training. Which aspect of work appeals to you most?**

**C:** The training programme is well organised with different modes of teaching and practicum to equip me with the basic skills and knowledge of an archivist in GRS. Having assisted in records appraisal in my present post, I appreciate that the description is essential to let the users know what the records are talking about. I will be happy to study the records and write a story about them for that purpose.

**K:** Through the records appraisal training, I understand that there are well-established principles, guidelines and procedures to conduct records appraisal and it is a very unique experience to a newcomer like me to have a thorough study of the records including the content, structure and context, and other areas in order to examine the archival value of records.

## What is the most memorable experience you have had as an Assistant Archivist? What is the hardest part of your work? Have you overcome this yet?

**C:** I am responsible for records appraisal and transfer and sometimes my working contacts in B/Ds might not realise what records appraisal is. How to resolve B/Ds' difficulties in understanding the process and establish better communication with them to reconcile our differences sometimes are quite laborious but it is a very rewarding experience for me to take forward the work of records appraisal with the cooperation and understanding of B/Ds.



**K:** I recalled that when I was a user of PRO, I had applied for the access to a closed record and my application was finally rejected. Frankly I was a little upset at that moment. After joining GRS, I understand that, on one hand, GRS has tried hard to make the records accessible to the public as far as practicable. On the other hand, there are rules and procedures governing the access to closed records in order to strike a balance between different factors, e.g. privacy and personal data of individuals.

In my present post, I am tasked with providing research support to archival legislation and practice. In fact, getting exposure to legal provisions and practice in records management in other jurisdictions is a challenging task. For instance, in conducting the research regarding overseas records management practices, the challenge is heightened, in part, by the different tradition and legal background for the administration of archives law in other countries.

## What advice will you give to those who wish to start a career in the field?

**C:** My advice came from what I perceived GRS before and after joining PRO. Indeed, there is a striking contrast between the image of GRS projected by the outsiders and my experience in PRO. It seems that the complexity of archives administration is largely not in sight. So if anyone seeks my advice to enter the archives profession, he or she should try to understand the tradition and practice of the archives institution in advance.

**K:** Be ready to read and study the information and knowledge which are totally new to you is my advice to them. You need to read a lot of documents and to prepare comprehensive reports. The job of an archivist is not only studying historical documents but also dealing with, in my case, the need to study archival legislation and issues of access to government records with greater transparency.



# Part II

## Year at a Glance

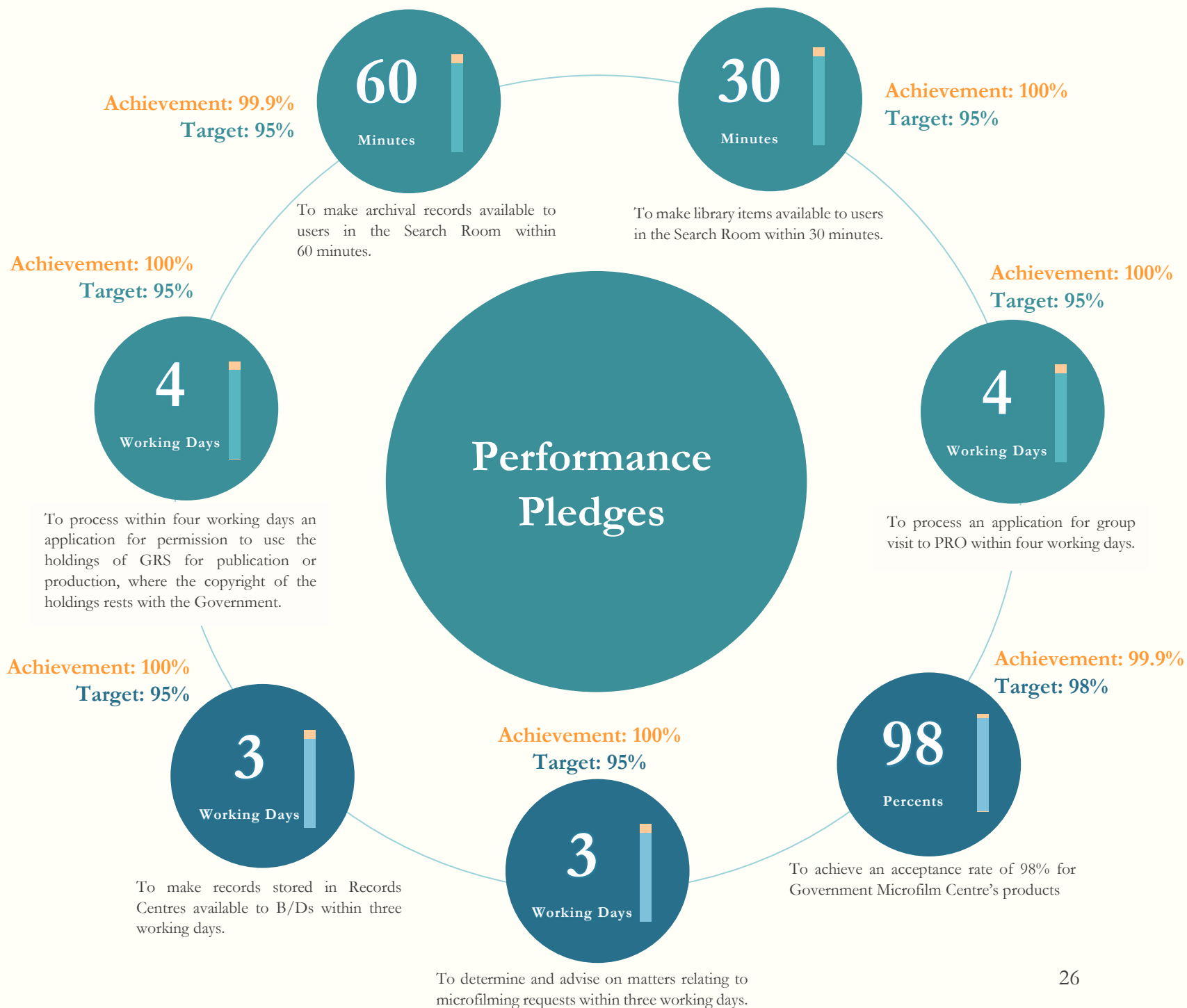






Exhibition of “Pleasure and Leisure: A Glimpse of Children’s Pastimes in Hong Kong”

# Performance Pledges in 2019



# Performance Indicators in 2019



To render reference and research services to the public:

No. of attendance

**Achievement: 6 059**

Target: 6 000

No. of enquiries

**Achievement: 11 016**

Target: 11 000

No. of group visits

**Achievement: 43**

Target: 30

No. of exhibition

**Achievement: 1**

Target: 1



To acquire archival records  
(linear metres)

**Achievement: 610**

Target: 600



To conduct departmental records  
management studies / reviews

**Achievement: 2**

Target: 2



To conduct training for government  
officers  
(no. of trainees)

**Achievement: 2 744**

Target: 2 500



To publish records management  
manuals, handbooks and newsletters

**Achievement: 2**

Target: 2



To provide intermediate storage  
facilities for inactive government  
records in terms of utilisation rate

**Achievement: 94.5%**

Target: 95%



To microfilm records for other  
government B/Ds  
(no. of images)

**Achievement: 2 764 401**

Target: 2 750 000

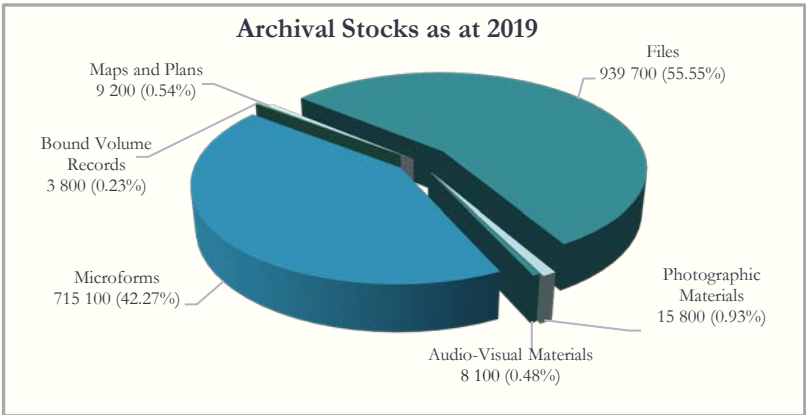
# Key Statistics

## Archival Management

### Archival Stocks

PRO has 2 552 Hong Kong Record Series and 220 Hong Kong Manuscript Series. They were transferred from government B/Ds, offices or agencies, public organisations, private institutions and individuals, and accessioned by PRO, adding up to about 22 829 linear metres (1 691 700 nos.). The breakdown is as follows:

- Approximately 22 473 linear metres of government archives from over 100 different government B/Ds, offices or agencies; and
- About 356 linear metres of non-government records of public organisations, private institutions and individuals associated with the history and development of Hong Kong.



### Access Requests

Public access will generally be allowed to archival records which have been in existence for not less than 30 years or the contents of which have at any time been published or wholly disclosed to the public. In 2019, there were 2 834 access requests for open records and 106 access requests for closed records. The results are tabulated below:

Nature of Requests	Number of Requests	Access Granted in Full	Access Granted in Part	Access Denied	Directed to Use B/Ds' Service	Withdrawn by Applicant
Open Records	2 834	2 834 (100%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Closed Records	106	64 (60.4%)	35 (33.0%)	0 (0%)	4 Note (3.8%)	3 (2.8%)

Note: The applicants were directed to use the existing charged service of the B/D concerned to obtain the information.



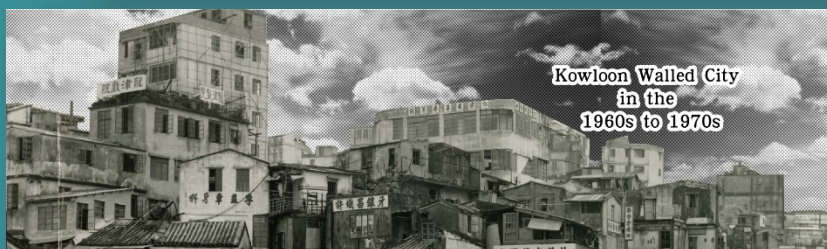
## Central Preservation Library for Government Publications

Central Preservation Library contains selected government publications, reports and printed materials on Hong Kong to preserve local documentary heritage. Its holdings date back to as early as the 1840s. They are held in different formats ranging from files, bound volumes, photographs, posters, maps and plans to films. Many of them have been digitised for convenient access in our online catalogue and they are described according to international standards. As at 31 December 2019, 44 500 government publications have been preserved in our Central Preservation Library.

## Educational Resources Portal

To provide convenient access to our records, GRS has prepared different kinds of online resources, including dozens of online exhibitions and digital albums, 53 Topical Guides, various thematic web pages, etc. In 2019, three new Topical Guides, entitled “Tourism”, “Textile Industry” and “Cholera”, have been added to the Educational Resources Portal to assist users in searching relevant PRO holdings on specific topics. In addition, four digital albums were developed in the year and made accessible on the Portal. They are “Activities of Princess Alexandra Community Centre in the 1960s”, “Children's Christmas Entertainment in Kowloon City 1968”, “Kowloon Walled City in the 1960s to 1970s” and “Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin and Sha Tin Districts in 1977”.

Four digital photo albums uploaded to the Educational Resources Portal in 2019



# Preservation and Conservation

## Conservation Treatment

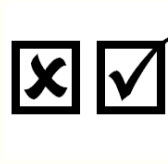
The number of archival and library items subjected to conservation treatment in 2019 was 33 339 sheets of document from 259 files and 1 volume of books. Some of the paper archives have to undergo minor treatment to ensure the clarity and readability of the records before the digitisation process. In 2019, the following items were preserved and conserved:



**48 151** frames of image were microfilmed



**40** maps were encapsulated



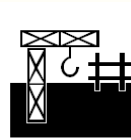
**5 303** items of archival records were assessed



**31 422** items of general and classified records were inspected



**38.33** linear metres of archives with risk of pest infestation were fumigated



**50** items of oversized maps and architectural plans were preserved



**33 339** sheets of document and **1** volume of books were conserved

## Digitisation of Archival Records

Through implementation of the digitisation project, GRS aims to empower the performance of our online search at @PRO and enrich the repository of our digital records with a view to providing an easily accessible means to facilitate public access to these archival records.

In 2019, a total of 340 153 digital images were produced from digitising selected archival items, scanning microfilm collection items, oversized maps and architectural plans, which increased our stock to 2.5 million digital images of archival holdings.



# Management of Government Records

## Records Scheduling and Disposal

### Establishment of Disposal Schedules

As at 31 December 2019, the accumulative number of disposal schedules established by B/Ds is around 14 500.



### Authorisation of Destruction of Records

In 2019, GRS approved the destruction of around 64 000 linear metres of records. Of these records, many are of routine nature, e.g. arrival and departure cards and case files relating to immigration matters which contained personal data, computer printouts relating to tax returns, reports of tax-related systems, etc. All these records were confirmed to have no archival value and have met the relevant retention and disposal requirements, as well as those set out in the governing legislation and regulations.

## Training and Consultancy

GRS is responsible for providing consultancy services in supporting B/Ds on issues and solutions relating to records management. Various kinds of training programmes are organised, including regular classes, topical seminars, briefings and workshops for records management personnel and general records users.

In 2019, GRS provided the following training services to government officers:

Training Events	Number of Events	Number of Participants
Classroom Training	82	2 744
Seminars, Briefings and Workshops	24	2 128
Train-the-trainer Workshops	5	177
i Records Management Training (iRMT) <sup>Note</sup> - Phase I	N/A	Over 1 600 officers registered and 408 completed all eight modules

Note: This online learning package is previously known as “Online Self-learning and Training on Records Management (OSTORM)”

# Reaching Out



**25 January**

The members of Hong Kong Archives Society (HKAS) visited GRS. GRS provided them with a “behind the scenes” tour and had exchange session with the HKAS. The members were pleased to learn more about the role of an archive and see how GRS preserves and protects the records that are important to the community.



**27 April**

Archivists of GRS conducted a lecture for 30 local scholars, most of them were regulars of GRS’ services. A workshop on conservation treatment of documents, including tear repairing and cello tape removal, was held after the lecture.



**9 April**

A delegation of 4 lecturers from the Gadjah Mada University of Indonesia visited PSO and the repositories in GRS regarding the preservation and storage facilities of archival records.

**25 February**

PRO staged the exhibition "Pleasure and Leisure: A Glimpse of Children's Pastimes in Hong Kong" together with two public engagement programmes, namely "Childlike Innocence on Camera" and "Share the Joy".





### May to August

The “Hong Kong Over the Past 100 Years Historical Photo Exhibition” co-organised by Jao Tsung-I Academy and GRS was launched from May to August 2019. Around 30 000 visitors patronaged the exhibition.



### 21 May

A group of delegates led by the Head of Information System Department, the Financial Services Bureau of the Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region visited GRS and our archives preservation and conservation facilities.



### 8 June

The theme of the 2019 International Archives Week was "Designing the Archives in the 21st Century" which focused on how in the 21st Century our profession can provide opportunities for human-centred design approaches to ensure we bring benefits to our community. GRS participated together with local institutions in an exhibition organised by the HKAS for the event. More than 30 replicas of our archival holdings were exhibited. GRS also delivered a talk on "Challenges and Transformation: Collaboration and Innovation of Archives in the New Era".





### 11 June

GRS Director led a delegation of four Archivist grade officers and a Curator to visit the Guangzhou National Archives. We have professional exchange on archives and records management, preservation of electronic records, access and promotion of archives. We also explored the opportunity of collaborating with the archives of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area to promote the appreciation and preservation of documentary heritage.



### 23 August

A delegation from M+ visited GRS. We shared with the delegation the archives management work in the Government and services of PRO. The delegation also toured around the facilities in Hong Kong Public Records Building.



### 21 to 25 October

A delegation of two Archivist grade officers and two Curator grade officers attended the 6th Annual Conference of International Council on Archive in Adelaide, Australia. The theme of the Conference was “Designing the Archive”. Our delegates joined various seminars, workshops and tours to facilities, etc., and participated in the discussion and experience sharing with the delegates from different countries and regions.



### 25 to 27 November

GRS Director led a delegation of three Archivist grade officers to attend the 14th General Conference of EASTICA and Seminar in Tokyo, Japan. The theme of the Conference was “Archives Today and Tomorrow: Prospering as a Diversity of Records Dramatically Increase”. GRS presented a territory report that highlighted our response and roadmap to the challenges of technological change. GRS was also approved as a new Executive Board Member of EASTICA at the General Conference.



### 30 October

The then Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Joshua LAW Chi-kong, GBS, JP accompanied by the then Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Thomas CHOW Tat-ming, JP, visited GRS and met with the then Director of Administration, Ms Esther LEUNG Yuet-yin, JP and senior staff of GRS as well as staff representatives of various grades to receive an update on the work of GRS and exchange views on matters of concern.

11



### 26 November

The Records Management Seminar for Public Organisations was held with a total of 255 participants from 31 public organisations. We invited Ms Stella SEE Sau-ying, Head of Records and Heritage Office of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs) to share with us the 'TWGHs' archives and the stories behind.



Part III

About  
GRS

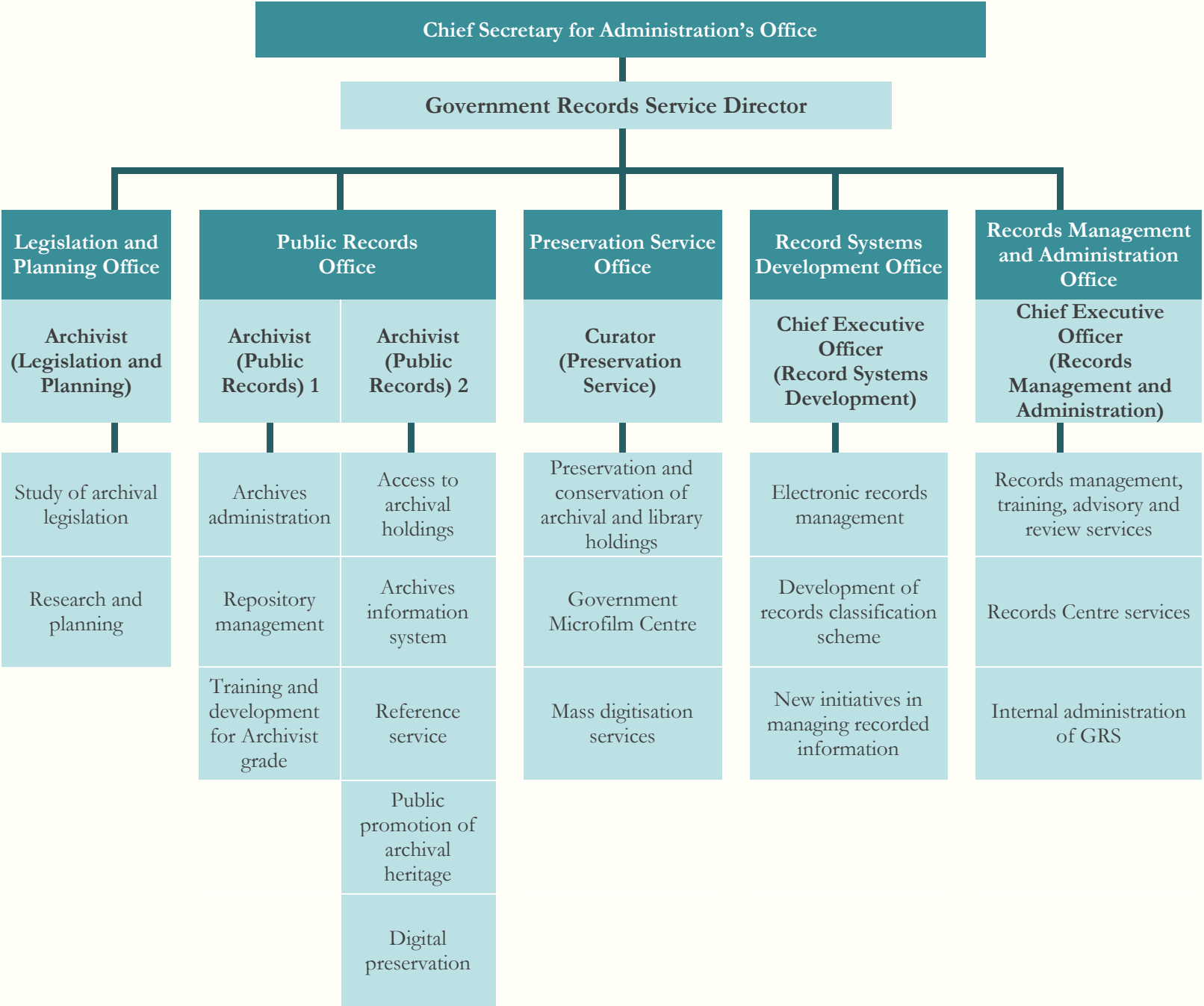






Microfilm Repository at Hong Kong  
Public Records Building

# Our Organisational Structure



# Our Staff

120

Staff



As at 31 December 2019

24



Archivist Grade

6



Curator Grade

19



Executive Officer Grade

1



Analyst/Programmer Grade

70

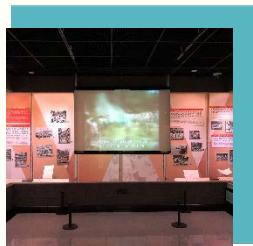


Clerical and Other Grades

# Our Facilities



Archival and Library  
Repositories



Exhibition Hall



Lecture Room



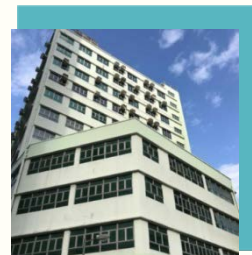
Search Room



Government Microfilm  
Centre



Preservation Laboratory



Records Centres



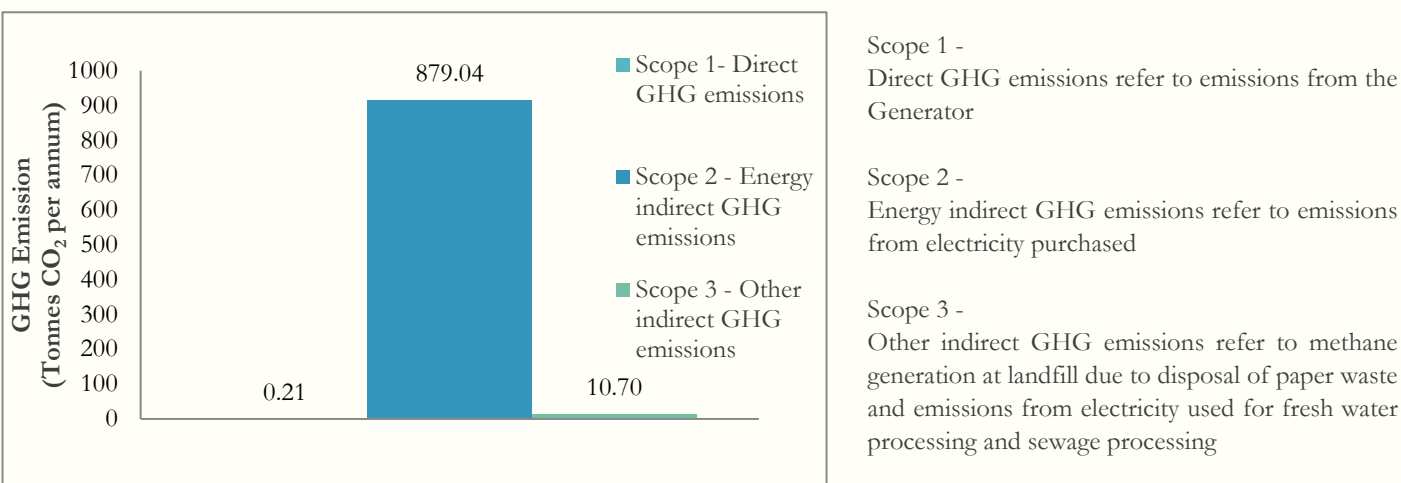
# Environmental Report

## Go Green

GRS is committed to ensuring that its operations are conducted, through the optimum use of resources and energy, in an environmentally conscious and responsible manner. “Go green!” is one of the core values of GRS and we are committed to be environmentally conscious through developing and promoting Electronic Records Management in the Government and public organisations.

## Energy and Carbon Management

A paper approach carbon audit exercise was conducted to assess the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of Hong Kong Public Records Building (HKPRB) in 2019. The audit results are as follows:



The above diagram shows that the major carbon emission source in HKPRB is consumption of electricity. Although there was a slight increase of 1.8% in energy indirect GHG emissions as compared with the result in 2018, this can be attributed to the 23% increase in the overall number of full-time staff and personnel working in HKPRB. With our concerted efforts in putting in place various energy saving measures, the GHG emission per employee was reduced from 11.26 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> in 2018 to 9.27 in 2019 while other indirect GHG emissions were also reduced from 14.62 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> in 2018 to 10.70 in 2019. GRS would strive to further reduce the energy indirect GHG emissions from HKPRB in the coming years.

## Way Forward

GRS will make continuous efforts in implementing green measures with a view to maximising energy savings.

# Abbreviation

B/D	Government bureau / department
CE	The Chief Executive
DRMR	Departmental Records Management Review
DA	Disposal Authority
EASTICA	East Asian Regional Branch of International Council on Archives
EffO	Efficiency Office
EIM	Electronic Information Management
ERKS	Electronic Recordkeeping System
GRS	Government Records Service
GHG	Greenhouse gas
HKAS	Hong Kong Archives Society
HKPRB	Hong Kong Public Records Building
IR	Infrared light
iRMT	i Records Management Training
LRC	Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong
LPO	Legislation and Planning Office
MDP	Mass Digitisation Project
MSI/HSI	Multispectral/Hyperspectral imaging
OGCIO	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
OAIS	Open Archival Information System
PRO	Public Records Office
PSO	Preservation Service Office
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom
TWGHs	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals
UV	Ultraviolet light
VIS	Visible light

