



THE MASS-OBSERVATION ARCHIVE

University of Sussex Library

ANNUAL REPORT

1 August 2002 – 31 July 2003

Report 25

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Lord Briggs

Trustees:
Professor Ruth Finnegan, Open University
Professor Brian Street, King's College London
Mrs Deborah Shorley, University of Sussex
Dr Alistair Thomson, University of Sussex

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Foreword

The Mass-Observation Archive has enjoyed an exceptionally busy year and this annual report is a testament to the ever-growing number of its achievements. Visits to the Archive, both personal and virtual, continue to increase and it is good to see how differently researchers use Mass-Observation material in their work. At the same time the Mass-Observation Project continues to flourish. Evolving technologies offer tremendous opportunities for our observers to communicate with us in quite new ways. For example, students at a Brighton secondary school have contributed their observations by means of the web, which may well prove to be an effective way of encouraging more young people to become involved in the Project.

As an educational charity Mass-Observation Archive does not set out to make money, but it is nonetheless pleasing to report that this year it has earned far more than it has spent. This allows us to invest in the future as never before, and we are confident that the next few years will see the Archive go from strength to strength on all fronts.

As ever we are grateful to the University of Sussex for its support, which gives the Archive a secure environment in which to flourish. But most importantly we owe our thanks to its Director, Dorothy Sheridan, and her team for their unswerving commitment to this unique and internationally renowned resource, of which we are all so proud.

Deborah Shorley
Chair, Mass-Observation Archive Trust
March 2004

Overview of the year

Research use and income

This year there have been two positive indicators of the Archive's continued success as a research resource: an increase in use for both the early and the contemporary collections and an improved financial position as a result of more substantial royalties and reproduction fees.

New professional post

As part of the new staffing structure for the University Library, Special Collections has been allocated a second professional member of staff. Fiona Courage took up the post of Assistant Archivist in January 2003 and acts as Dorothy Sheridan's deputy. The Archive has already benefited from Fiona's professional skills, particularly her expertise in electronic information-handling. Fiona chose to base her MA dissertation on a pilot digitisation project using a selection of Mass-Observation texts (see Appendix 4: Publications). Her evaluation of this project provides useful guidelines for considering future digitisation projects. From April 2003, Fiona took six months' maternity leave. During that time, her post was ably filled by Lucy Dean.

Planning the future

At their meeting on 7 February 2003, the Trustees discussed the future of the Archive, and in particular focused on ways the Trust's funds could be used to develop the Mass-Observation Project. They agreed that in line with the wider developments in the Library, the Archive should produce and publicise its policies. The Director was asked to prepare a three year rolling plan and a collections management policy. These were presented to the Trustees at their subsequent meeting on 24 June and accepted with some emendations.

Three year rolling plan

The plan covers the diversification of the panel of correspondents, improved promotion and exploitation of the collection and the investigation into funding sources for new activities. A key proposal is to use of Trust funds to support the appointment of a part-time Development Officer for two years from February 2004.

Collections management policy

This policy incorporates the aims of the Mass-Observation Archive and the responsibilities of the Trustees and Director. It is an elaboration of the original Trust Deed of 1975. It also identifies the kinds of material that the Archive may acquire.

The Trustees aim to

- continue in the tradition of the original M-O in documenting the everyday lives of people living in the UK
- maintain and develop the role of the M-OA as a centre of expertise in the care of life story materials and the study of everyday life in the UK
- preserve the archive created by the original M-O (1937-), and any new related collections subsequently acquired, in accordance with best practice archival standards

- create a documentary record of everyday life in the UK as it is experienced and reported not by the media or by professional commentators, but by people in their own words and images
- ensure that the M-OA is as fully accessible as possible without jeopardising its physical or intellectual security
- augment the original archive with new collections as specified in the Acquisitions Policy
- promote the M-OA as a resource for teaching and learning in both academic and non-academic contexts through publications, conferences, public events, digital media (including website) and the national and international media

Research use

Visits and enquiries

Of the 1,221 research visits to Special Collections this year, 792 (65%) were to consult the Mass-Observation Archive. The average number of *substantial* enquiries per day (phone, email, letter and in person) was 5 (average for Special Collections as a whole is 8 per day). Responding to enquiries constitutes one of the most staff intensive activities. Despite the fact that researchers have access to very full searchable catalogues on the website, there are still detailed questions which need to be answered and many researchers ask broader historical questions as well as questions about methodology and research ethics. By bringing the Archive to the attention to a wider public, the availability of catalogues on the website has had the effect of increasing the number of enquiries.

It is clear from information provided by the application for access forms that researchers are using the M-OA website to decide in advance whether a visit would be useful. This preparation of requests for material from the on-line catalogues means that visits can be shorter and more focused. There has been a rise in the demand for remote access and scans/photocopies can be supplied without a visit providing items are fully identified by the researcher. A request from Dr James Hinton (University of Warwick) to work on the Mass-Observation wartime diaries and directives at home was discussed by the Trustees and it was finally agreed that the duplicate set of microfilm copies would be lent to him for two years provided they were used exclusively for his own research.

Use by undergraduate students was substantial this year and reflects a strong relationship between the Archive and members of Sussex teaching faculty particularly those in History, Social Anthropology and Media Studies. Wherever possible, undergraduates have been provided with a group introduction which offers them some of the investigative and analytical skills they need to work on primary sources. Fiona Courage has begun running sessions for groups and will share this work with Dorothy Sheridan.

See Appendix 1 for research visit numbers and a breakdown of types of researchers.

Acquisitions

Euan Duff photographic collection

In November, Dorothy Sheridan collected additional material from Euan Duff to augment the collection already at the M-OA. The second batch includes his essays in photo-journalism written in the 1980s, and a large bound volume of photographs entitled "March from Aldermaston, September 1959".

Histories of the Millennium

This collection consists of over 100 community histories written by members of groups from all parts of the UK as a result of an initiative by Professors Ruth Finnegan and Michael Drake (Open Studies in Family and Community History Research Group, Open University). The Project was set up in 1997 to promote and support the creation of local histories for the Millennium year. The collection fills 12 archive boxes and includes published histories, background papers and a detailed report by Dr John MacKay who co-ordinated the project.

Re-locations of material

Brighton Women's Centre archive

As agreed by the Trustees, the Brighton Women's Centre archive was transferred to the Women's Library in London on 24 September 2002.

Geoffrey Gorer papers

The Gorer papers owned by the M-OA were donated by the M-OA Trustees to the University of Sussex. In 1976, just after Tom Harrison's death, Geoffrey Gorer gave the first part of his papers relating to his social research in Britain to the M-OA; subsequently, he bequeathed the rest of his papers including his library to the University of Sussex. The two collections are now amalgamated as one within Special Collections.

Publications and publicity

For a full list of publications appearing during the year, see Appendix 4.

Poets and Polymaths

A chapter on the Mass-Observation Archive appeared in ***Poets & Polymaths: Special Collections at the University of Sussex*** which was launched at the Library on 14 November 2002.

The book production was supported by funds from the Research Support Library Programme awarded to the University Library in order to enhance research access and exploitation. It was compiled, edited and designed over a six month period by Neil Parkinson with the assistance of Sandra Koa Wing. A number of researchers who had used the M-OA were able to attend the reception including Angus Calder (author of *The People's War* and co-author of *Speak for Yourself: a Mass-Observation Anthology*) and Lord Briggs, the Archive's patron. Copies of *Poets and Polymaths* have been distributed free of charge to UK university libraries and academic departments as well as to interested individuals, archive professionals and relevant organisations.

Edited diaries

Since December 2002, the author Simon Garfield has been working on the anthology drawn from the postwar M-O diaries and a contract with Ebury Press has been negotiated by Camilla Hornby at Curtis Brown. Publication planned for late 2004.

Professor Robert Malcolmson (Queens University, Kingston, Ontario) has successfully negotiated deals with two publishers for two women's diaries written for M-O in the 1940s. One of them written by Mass-Observers, Olivia Cockett, *Love and War in London 1939-42*, is to be published by Wilfred Laurier Press in their life writing series in 2004. He is also working on a second diary by Rachel Dhonau. Relatives of Mrs Dhonau have given support for her diary to be published.

A history of Mass-Observation

Palgrave Press have commissioned Dr Nick Hubble to write a history of Mass-Observation. Dr Hubble recently completed a D.Phil thesis at Sussex which dealt extensively with early Mass-Observation: "George Orwell and Mass-Observation: mapping the politics of everyday life in England 1936-1941" (copy in Special Collections).

Adam Matthew Microfilm series

The sales of microfilm sets of the Mass-Observation Topic Collections in 8 parts have been very good (hence income from royalties). Details of institutions and libraries world-wide who have bought sets are available on the website.

One of the key benefits of this publication initiative is that world-wide access to the Mass-Observation material has been enormously increased since 2001. However, since the customers are all libraries (mainly in universities) the material remains framed within an institutional context.

Press articles

There were passing references in two *Guardian* articles: "That lad will go far", an article about George Formby, 6 December 2002, and "Unseasonal changes", article about London, 7 December 2002. In a major feature on the role of women and war in the *Observer*, "Battle for Iraq: how women's roles are camouflaged", 23 March 2003, there was a reference to women's opinions on war expressed via the Mass-Observation Project.

More substantial references included:

"Anthropologists at home; cage me a Harrisson" in *Times Literary Supplement*, major review of the biography of Tom Harrisson by Judith Heiman with cover photograph of Harrisson and his family in 1940, 16 August 2002.

"Immature, immoral, vulgar, materialistic...", article about British views of Americans based on Mass-Observation material, *New Statesman*, 3 March 2003.

"What people think of mobile phones, war and periods", *The Brighton & Hove Argus*, double page spread on the Mass-Observation Project, 1 April 2003.

'Women's views on war with Iraq', *University of Sussex Bulletin* 4 April 2003.

'Amateurs watch over our history', *Independent Review*, 3 June 2003.

"Research: 'amateurs' add value", *Sesame* July/August 2003, issue 216.

The Mass-Observation Project

Directives 2002-3

Although only two directives (Autumn 2002 and Spring 2003) were sent out this year, each one contained three substantial themes. In order to gather responses to the rapid development of the situation in Iraq, correspondents were asked to keep a continuous thematic diary recording their reactions. Other themes covered were mobile phones, owning pets, television and images of the 1950s and 60s and diaries for four successive Saturday afternoons in Spring 2003. This latter theme linked in with the British Library's Reaching the Regions initiative which focuses on leisure use on Saturdays. Extracts will be used in forthcoming digital publications in conjunction with projects run by the South East Film and Video Archive (University of Brighton).

The panel of correspondents

Just over 300 people were taking part at the end of the year and this is the lowest number reached since the first year of the Project. Of equal concern is the lack of diversity among the writers. Despite the current policy to recruit people under 50, older people still dominate the panel. These issues are to be addressed as part of the Development Plan for the Project.

Commissioned directives

The Project continues to attract researchers keen to collaborate. Dr Carl Adams (Portsmouth University) co-designed the directive on mobile phones; Edwina Griffiths, a postgraduate researcher at Sussex, co-designed the directive on images of the 1950s and 1960s.

Researchers who commissioned earlier directives still visit regularly to work on the material: Louise Purbrick (University of Brighton) on wedding presents, Bill Bytheway (Open University) on birthdays, Claire Langhamer (Sussex) on courting, Kaeren Harrison (University College, Chichester) on extra-marital affairs, Nick Couldry (LSE) on the media and Derek McGhee on gays in the family (University of Southampton). Both Alistair Black (public libraries) and James Thomas (death of Princess Diana) published research based on the M-O Project this year (see Appendix 4).

The Varndean School Project

Early in 2003, we began discussions with Seb Handelman, school librarian at Varndean, a secondary school in Brighton. Seb is a former postgraduate student at the UoS (in Media Studies) and was familiar with the M-O Project. Fiona Courage set up a special customised webpage so that pupils at Varndean could participate in the M-O Project. Seb modified five existing directives (on the themes of war, birthdays, humour, mobile phones, and music) to appeal to a younger age group (12-16 year olds) and these were mounted simultaneously on the webpages. Pupils were allocated their own unique number and offered anonymity.

Of the 22 pupils initially recruited, 18 submitted contributions. The project raised a number of issues which will be useful in future similar initiatives. Seb produced a report on the project and is keen to continue to cooperate with the M-OA although he has left Varndean to take up a new post at Fabrica (a Brighton art gallery). Further projects with Varndean may be possible with the assistance of the Deputy Head, Ian Batty.

The Friends' Scheme

Open Day

This year's successful Open Day for Friends took place on 12 March 2003. We decided to combine the event with a Library staff development session. Colleagues from the rest of the Library were invited to visit during the morning to look at displays of original Mass-Observation material. The Archive Friends were welcomed by Debby Shorley, Chair of the Trustees.

During the afternoon, there were presentations by Dorothy Sheridan, Fiona Courage and Claire Langhamer, a member of the Sussex History department. Fiona demonstrated her work in digitising some of the Mass-Observation File Reports; Claire talked about the use of M-O material for both research purposes and for her teaching on the "Critical approaches to Mass-Observation" MA course.

Friends' Annual Newsletter

The 2002 Newsletter for Friends was compiled and designed by Archive assistant Karen Watson with help from Special Collection colleagues. It was mailed out to 144 Friends in October 2002 and the postage costs were covered once again by the University of Sussex solicitors, DMH of Brighton.
Income from Friends' Subscriptions, 2002-3: £3,125.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to current colleagues in Special Collections for assistance with the preparation of this Report: Joy Eldridge, Lucy Pearson, Judy Pickering, Helen Monk and Fiona Courage.

Thanks also for work on the Annual Accounts to Paul Clark in his role of Independent Examiner, and to Cara Starbuck, Sandra Webb and John Sanders in the University of Sussex Finance Office.

Dorothy Sheridan
Director, Mass-Observation Archive
March 2004

APPENDIX 1 RESEARCH USE

Numbers of researchers

Year	No of individual researchers	% of all researchers to Special Collections
2002-2003	288	59%
2001-2002	285	64%

Numbers of visits

Year	No of visits	% of all visits to Special Collections
2002-2003	792	65%
2001-2002	754	72%

Number of visitors in groups

Year	Visitors
2002-2003	230
2001-2002	241

Number of substantial enquiries (estimate)

Year	No of enqs	% of all visits to Special Collections
2002-2003	1,200	62%
2001-2002	Equivalent figures not available	

Categories of researcher as percentage of total

	2002-3	2001-2002
		%
Academics	13	10
Postgraduate students	40	33
Undergraduate students	29	34
Adult/Continuing Ed students	2	4
School (teachers & students)	2	4
Freelance writers & researchers	5	4
Media researchers	4	1
Other (museum & archive professionals, publishers, exhibition organisers, UoS staff)	5	12

APPENDIX 2 M-O PROJECT DIRECTIVES

Directives mailed out and replies received 2002-3

	Nos sent out	Replies received	Topic	External commission
Autumn 2002	319	191	Pt. 1 Mobile phones	Carl Adams (Portsmouth University)
	319	180	Pt. 2 Owning pets	
	319	147	Pt. 3 The world situation at the end of 2002	
Spring 2003	324	159	Pt. 1 Television and images of the 1950s	Edwina Griffiths (UoS postgrad)
		160	Pt. 2 Saturday afternoons	
		119	Pt. 3 War with Iraq	

Directives from 2001-2 now available for access

	Nos Sent out	Replies received	Topic	External commission
Special Directive	388	Filed with Part 2 below	11 September 2001	
Autumn 2001	396	168	Pt.1-Media	Nick Couldry (LSE)
		198	Pt.2- World since 11 September*	
Spring 2002	303	173	Pt.1-Having a laugh	Sandra Koa Wing (UoS p/g) Robert Lacey (author)
		174	Pt.2-Royal Family	
Summer 2002	303	186	Pt.1-Birthdays	Bill Bytheway (Open University)
		175	Pt.2-Issues in the news	

APPENDIX 3 ACQUISITIONS

Archival material

The M-O Project: replies to directives and diaries: 10 boxes

Histories for the Millennium Collection: 12 boxes

Euan Duff Photographic Collection: additional material: 3 boxes

Personal collections from individual donors: 6 boxes

Related printed materials

Books and articles: 14 items

Associated materials (box equivalents)

Including essays, papers and dissertations and administrative records: 11 boxes

APPENDIX 4 PUBLICATIONS

Books and articles using the M-O Archive as a substantial source:

- Bennett, Tony & Watson, Diane, eds (2002) *Understanding everyday life*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Black, Alistair & Crann, Melvyn (2002) "In the public eye: a mass observation of the public library" in *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 3 (3), pp 145-157
- Couldry, N & Langer, Ana Ines (2003) "The future of public connection: some early sightings" (Cultures of Consumption Working Papers, No 4), published electronically at www.consume.bbk.ac.uk/publications.
- Highmore, Ben (2002) *Everyday life and cultural theory: an introduction*, London: Routledge
- Highmore, Ben, ed (2002) *The everyday life reader*, London: Routledge
- Homan, Jacqueline (2002) "The social construction of natural disaster" pp 141-156, in Pelling, Mark, ed , *Natural disasters and development in a globalizing world*, London: Routledge
- Jury, David ,ed/designer (1998) *MO in darkest England*, with an introduction by Dorothy Sheridan, Manningtree:Foxash Press
- McKernan, Luke (2002) *Yesterday's news: the British cinema newsreel reader*, London: British Universities Film & Video Council (BUFVC)
- Roiser, Martin (2001) "Social psychology and social concern in 1930s Britain" pp169-187, in Bunn, G C et al, eds, *Psychology in Britain: historical essays and personal reflections*, Leicester, BPS Books
- Sheridan, Dorothy (2002) "Using the Mass-Observation Archive" pp 66-79, in Jamieson, Anne & Victor, Christina eds *Researching ageing and later life: the practice of social gerontology*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press
- Sheridan, Dorothy & Holland, Caroline (2003) "A Day in the life: interpreting first-hand accounts from the Mass-Observation Archive" pp 20-33, in Bytheway, Bill, ed, *Everyday living in later life*, Milton Keynes: Centre for Policy on Ageing, Open University
- Thomas, James (2002) *Diana's mourning: a people's history*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press
- Roodhouse, Mark (2002) "The 1948 Belcher Affair and Lynskey Tribunal" in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol 13, No 4, pp 348-411

Dissertations & theses:

- Courage, Fiona (2003) "Digitising a special collection: assessing the feasibility of digitising the Mass-Observation Archive" MA dissertation in Information Management at the University of Brighton, completed in Oct 2002; graduated in February 2003 with distinction.
- Hubble, Nick (2002) "George Orwell and Mass-Observation; mapping the politics of everyday life in England 1936-1941" D.Phil thesis, University of Sussex
- Koa Wing, Sandra (2002) "Having a laugh: exploring humour and identity through Mass-Observation" MA dissertation in Life History Research: Oral History and Mass-Observation at the University of Sussex, completed in September 2002; graduated in February 2003 with distinction.

APPENDIX 5 GROUP VISITS

UoS undergraduate courses

Date	Title of the course	Tutor/contact	Nos in group
13/11/02	Critical Studies	Chana Moshenska	15
18/11/02	CCS	Louise Westwood	20
20/11/02	CCS	Louise Westwood	3
25/11/02	CCS	Claire Langhamer	6
19/11/02	Critical Reading	Claire Langhamer	13
10/01/03	Social Investigation	Jenny Shaw	10
20/01/03	History	Colin Brooks	7
27/01/03	Democracy Past and Present	Colin Brooks	9
01/05/03	Domesticity + Discontents in Post-War Britain	Claire Langhamer	12

UoS postgraduate courses

09/10/02	MA in Contemporary History	Carol Dyhouse	12
29/01/03	Research Methods/Anthropology	Ann Whitehead	10
Autumn & Spring terms	MA in Life History Research: Critical Approaches to Mass-Observation Theories and Methods of Oral History Life Story Data Analysis	Claire Langhamer, Gerry Holloway Alistair Thomson	20

UoS Continuing Education

22/10/02	Life History Work	Rena Feld	15
15/01/03	Local History in context	Geoff Mead	6

University of Brighton

12/12/02	BA Ed: course in social history (u/g)	Sally Pearce	9
25/02/03	Decorative Art and Craft (p/g)	Lou Taylor	6
22/04/03	BA in Information and Library Studies (Library typology)	Noreen Grant	7

Other academic institutions

15/08/02	St Andrews School	Kevin Newman	30
02/05/03	Winchester School of Art	Judith Atfield	4

Archival & Professional

09/05/03	CILIP (retired members group)	Run by SC staff	6
04/07/03	ARLIS (Annual conference)	Run by SC staff	7
11/08/03	Kingston University Library staff	Run by SC staff	11
12/08/03	Portsmouth University Library staff	Run by SC staff	12

External talks, presentations, classes and consultancies

University of Portsmouth on 27 November.

University of Keele on 4 December. This formed part of an invitation from the Vice Chancellor to advise on the management of the "La Play Archive" at Keele which shares some of the same qualities as the Mass-Observation Archive.

Bexhill Pavilion on 22 March at a community writers and publishers event. She also set up a small stall)

Press & radio: two interviews for BBC radio, 25 March and one interview for *Brighton & Hove Argus* (published CHECK) on the subject of women & war.

British Library: attended annual trustees' meeting as a trustee of the National Life Story Collection.

Bishopsgate Institute, London, to advise on the management of the papers of historian Raphael Samuel, London 21 May.

Pavis Centre for Social and Cultural Change: paper at "Researchers Outside the Walls" conference at the Pavis Centre for Social and Cultural Research, Open University, May.

ARLIS Annual Conference (UK and Ireland Art Libraries Society): presentation on the visual aspects on the M-OA, 3 July.

Pelham House, Lewes: public lecture: "What is the importance of Mass-Observation?" part of the Annual Tom Paine Festival, 11 July.

For publications, see Appendix 4 under Sheridan.