

The Mass Observation Project

Terms of agreement with commissioning researchers

The Mass Observation Project is a longitudinal project which has been in operation since 1981. It relies entirely on the trust and commitment of its volunteer correspondents. Any specific directive or collaboration must take into account the long term needs of the Project. It is financed by charitable contributions and fees generated by collaborative work. Researchers who wish to commission parts of directives are therefore asked to agree the following conditions:

1. The need to protect the privacy of the Mass Observation correspondents is paramount. No attempt must be made to identify the correspondents, to contact them directly or to reproduce information about them which could lead to their identification. Researchers will have access to basic biographic information about the correspondents including (where known) age, sex, marital status, place of residence and occupation.
2. Original papers may not be removed from the Archive. Work must take place, by appointment, on Special Collection premises in the University of Sussex Library. Any copies are for the exclusive use of the researcher named below and must not be made available in any format to anyone else without the formal permission of the Trustees.
3. Replies resulting from the directives will normally be made available for general public access (that is, to all researchers including the commissioning researcher) after being sorted and checked.
4. The final form of a commissioned directive is subject to the approval of the Mass Observation Archive. The form, length, content and language of the directive must conform to the 'house style' and be consistent with existing practices so that no long-term damage to the project is sustained. In practice, the directive text would be a collaborative production between the Archive and the researcher.
5. The fee charged by the Trustees does not include any in-house analysis or photocopying.
6. Every effort will be made to ensure that the response rate is comparable with previous response rates in the Project, but researchers are warned that a specified amount of data can never be guaranteed.
7. The Project can only continue if it charges for commissions. All researchers should seek financial sponsorship and build the full fee charged by the MOA into any applications to grant-giving bodies. We recognise that not all researchers are able to find the full fee, and we therefore operate a sliding scale of charges. Researchers should recognise, however, that any contribution less than the whole fee amounts to our subsidising their research. The fee which is eventually agreed will reflect both the ability of the researcher to pay and the needs of the Archive.
8. The replies to all directives (including those received as a result of a commissioned directive) remain the property of the Mass Observation Archive Trustees. The non-exclusive right to quote up to 500 words from the directive responses is granted by the Trustees as part of this agreement. This right applies to text in the English language throughout the world in a single publication published, commissioned or otherwise authored by the commissioner, and in print form only. This agreement covers the licensing of this one specified use in physical print form and applications for additional uses (including other formats such as digital, and other territories and media) must be made to the Archive's literary agent, Gordon Wise, Curtis Brown Group Ltd, Haymarket House, 28-29 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4SP massobservation@curtisbrown.co.uk, and standard fees shall apply.
9. The commissioner must undertake to include the following acknowledgement and copyright notice in every copy of the work in which the Mass Observation material appears, and to provide the Archive with one voucher copy of the work on publication:

Mass Observation material reproduced with permission of Curtis Brown Group Ltd, London on behalf of the Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive. Copyright (c) The Trustees of the Mass Observation Archive

I accept the above terms of agreement:

Signed..... Date.....

Ethical practice and the Mass Observation Project

The Mass Observation Archive (MOA) is a small educational Charitable Trust held at the University of Sussex. The five Trustees adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice in recognition of the very personal and sometimes sensitive nature of the material in their care.

The Mass Observation Project (MOP) solicits autobiographical and documentary material from volunteer participants (known as the 'Panel') from around the UK. The material is processed, stored and made available for research at the MOA. This Project has been running since 1981.

Data protection

The MOA is exempt from having to register formally with the Information Commissioner's Office because it is a not-for-profit organisation. Nevertheless the MOA/MOP complies with the spirit of the Data Protection (1998):

- The "data subjects" (ie unpaid members of the MO Panel) are aware of the purpose of the collection
- The MOA is in contact with the "data subjects" regularly and has obtained their consent to keep the information they send in
- The information is made available for research purposes anonymously
- The database of names and addresses is not sold on or made available to other parties
- The resulting material is for a "special purpose" ie research under the Data Protection Act which means that keeping the information for posterity is part of the purpose.

Security and storage

The collection is stored and made available to the public under the highest standards of care within the Special Collections department of the University of Sussex Library. The Special Collections Manager is a professional information specialist with knowledge of data protection, copyright and privacy regulations. Material is stored in a locked and controlled environment. Material is consulted with the permission of the Trustees and all use takes place within the supervised reading rooms in the University Library unless specific controlled and agreed arrangements are made for access to copies (digital or paper). All researchers are required to sign an access form agreeing to conditions of use of the material before they can gain access.

Protection, anonymity and privacy

Contemporary material from the Panel is stored by number not name and only basic non-identifiable biographical information is made accessible. Permission to publish is granted by the Trustees providing the identities of the writers are protected. All members of the Panel sign forms about access to and reproduction of their texts.

Dorothy Sheridan
Director, Mass Observation Project
10 March 2010