

The Mass Observation Project

Notes for research students

Referencing guidelines for working with the directive replies received since 1981

The following is a recommended procedure but researchers should feel free to adapt the guidelines for their own purposes. The main aim should be to ensure that your path through the material can easily be re-traced by another researcher.

Please always remember that this material is very recent and often very personal. It may be sensitive. If in any doubt about including an extract, please consult Special Collections staff. You must make sure that nothing you include can lead to the identification of a MO correspondent. You should reduce real names, even first names, to initials in the text of quotations. Certain directive replies have a bright red sheet attached forbidding quotation. *You must not quote directly from their replies.*

1. While reading the replies

It is good practice to record your references as you read original documents. Note down the number of the MOP correspondent as you make notes from their texts. It is much harder to re-find extracts at a later date. It also may not be possible to get an appointment in the Special Collections the day before an exam submission date! Special Collections staff are not in a position to do reference checking on your behalf.

2. Describing your sources in the main body of your text

It is always helpful to explain your source and the background to your methodology, so you should consider including in your work the following:

- What the MO Project is and where the material has been consulted. The most up to date description of the MOP is on the website at www.massobs.org.uk
- The background and provenance of the MO directive replies: ie what a directive is
- Which directives you are using, ie whether all your references come from the replies to one individual directive (eg Spring 1991) or from several different directives
- How you have made your selection from the replies
- A production of the directive or directive part in your notes or in your appendices
- A note to explain that numbers are used for MO correspondents to protect their identity

3. When making quotations from the replies, or when referring to the replies

When working from a single set of directive replies:

Add the number of the MO correspondent you have quoted at the end of a quotation. This is a number preceded by a letter. Take care that you are not reproducing their gender and date of birth which many of them also include at the top of their replies! :

Example: [F3341].

You might like to "humanise" this by adding biographical details:

Example: [F3341, male student aged 22 from Birmingham]
or [R4216, hairdresser, female in her thirties, from London]

The information you use can be taken from the person's own "mini biography" on the reply or from the print outs or from the blue folders on the shelves in the Special Collections Reading Room. These folders contain the completed biographical information forms sent in when someone joins the Project.

You could also make up a pseudonym but make sure that the person's number is also included.

When working with several different sets of directive replies:

If you are quoting from or referring to several of sets of directive replies, you need to specify which directive each quotation comes from. You can either use the date and term or the number of the directive (see the list of themes and directives). So you would add to each quotation

Example: [F3342, Spring Directive 1995, part 2].

4. At the end of your essay, chapter, dissertation, book

Unpublished material should be listed separately from books and articles in your bibliography. You should include a subsection headed "**Archival Sources**". You should include here all original material you have consulted including the MO directive replies.

Suggested format:

Archival Sources:

Mass Observation Archive (University of
Sussex): Replies to Spring 1991 directive
and replies to Autumn 1995 directive.

5. Abbreviations

DR = Directive Reply
MOP = Mass Observation Project
MOA = Mass Observation Archive
SC = Special Collections

The Mass Observers are known as "Correspondents"