

Mass Observation Archive

Strategic Plan 2016-2021

Context

The Mass Observation Archive (MOA) specialises in material about everyday life in Britain. It contains papers generated by the original Mass Observation social research organisation (1937 to early 1950s), and newer material collected continuously since 1981 (Mass Observation Project). MOA is a charitable trust in the care of the University of Sussex. It is housed at The Keep as part of the University's Special Collections.

The aim of this plan is to:

- define the distinctive role and direction of the Archive
- assist robust financial planning
- guide Trustees' decision-making
- guide the Curator and staff team
- define the role of Trustees, staff and others.

This is a plan intended to guarantee the future of MOA as a growing public collection, accessible to all who wish to learn more about ourselves and preserved for future generations to study, understand and enjoy as a single collection.

Our mission statement

The mission of MOA is to generate, collect, disseminate and preserve a record of everyday life in modern Britain through personal narratives.

Our values

Underpinning our mission is a set of values which guide our work:

- we work collaboratively and openly, with any partner who shares our vision for the Archive
- we believe in the highest levels of professionalism and scholarship
- we are bold and imaginative about how to build the archive and how to promote it to new audiences
- we respect the founding principles of Mass Observation: that it is democratic and empowering, and is about giving a voice to those often left without one
- we will champion MOA as a national asset

Our priorities

Over the next five years 2016-2021 we aim to focus on four priority areas:

- i) **reviewing the governance** of MOA
- ii) **managing and developing** the collections of MOA

- iii) **managing and increasing our resources**, including finances, staff and volunteers
- iv) **disseminating our material and communicating** with our audiences

i) Reviewing the governance of MOA

We have a duty to ensure that we reflect our mission and values through the governance structures of MOA.

Our focus will be on:

- reviewing our current governance arrangements, to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and meet the needs of MOA over the next decade
- reviewing the Trustees' arrangements, including the skill-set required by the Board to deliver the strategic plan, whether the size of the board is right, and whether new Trustees with specific aptitudes should be recruited
- reviewing the relationship with the Royal Anthropological Institute, and whether other academic or professional institutes should have a relationship with the Board
- creating a 'Risk Register' to serve as a central repository for all risks identified by the Trustees and, for each risk, to include information such as source, nature, treatment option, existing counter-measures, and recommended counter-measures
- exploring the arrangement with the University of Sussex with a view to formalising the services that the University provides to MOA and vice versa.

It is anticipated that this review will require external expert support.

The review will be anchored in the belief that governance must be aligned with overall strategy and that we should be aware of any unintended consequences.

ii) Managing and developing the collections of MOA

It is a key priority to guarantee the physical and intellectual integrity of the collection.

We will do this by deploying the latest techniques, most robust methods and highest professional standards of curatorship and scholarship.

We will embrace the opportunities of the digital revolution, and continue to use digital platforms to provide accessibility for our collection, and to engage with our audiences via social media such as Twitter.

Our focus will be on:

- maintaining and developing access, both physical and online
- reviewing our policies on the value of publications, balancing our need to generate revenue with our values of accessibility and scholarship
- maintaining a balance between the care of existing collections and the generation or acquisition of new material
- as and when finances and staffing allow, investing in new research on the collections; for example through funded research appointments

- ensuring policies on data and security (e.g. copyright, privacy, data protection and defamation) are fully up-to-date and legally compliant
- monitoring and analysing participation in the Mass Observation Project to ensure its continued value

iii) Managing and increasing our resources

The Trustees have a duty to ensure the financial stability and sustainability of MOA, based on efficiency and prudence.

Our focus will be on:

- developing a five-year fundraising and financial development plan, including a thorough review of our investment portfolio and investment policies
- drawing up a five-year financial projection 2016-2021
- ensuring effective deployment of human resources (including staff, trustees, volunteers and interns)
- developing and strengthening skills by investing in relevant continuing professional development
- making financial provision, where prudent, for supporting research that will enhance the value of the Collections to our audiences

iv) Disseminating our materials and communicating with our audiences

The Trustees have a duty to ensure that the MOA is widely disseminated for education and research.

Our focus will be on:

- creating a robust communications plan
- developing a network of global strategic partnerships
- maximising resources available for communications
- maximising opportunities offered by local and regional partnerships

This plan will form the basis of a series of operational plans over the next five years. The MOA Trustees will review it annually, and make alterations as necessary.

**Mass Observation Trustees
November 2015**