Mass-Observation in the 1990s
Autumn Directive 1998

PART ONE
Giving and receiving presents

The first part of the directive is about your experience of present-giving and receiving. We are especially interested in any information you can provide us with about wedding presents (see lower down the page).

As usual, please remember to start your reply with a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

1. Giving presents

First, giving presents: some people never give presents, so if this applies to you, please could you say something about that.

If you do give presents, please describe the kinds of occasions when you yourself give presents (but leave out Weddings until you answer the specific questions later). Then write about the kinds of people (and their relationship to you) who receive presents from you. You might mention something about your experience growing up and how things have changed over the years.

Are the peoplewho get presents *from you* the same as those who *give you* presents in return?

What kinds of presents do you choose and how do you decide? You might want to mention here the cost and the ease or difficulty of obtaining items, whether you ask people what they want first, how you work out what other people might like, how you get presents to people, especially if they do not live near you and so on.

Do you give money or tokens as presents? If so, what are your reasons?

Some presents are not actually objects but treats (eg, an outing, a holiday, a meal out or even something like a hot air balloon ride, a flying lesson....). Have you ever given someone something like this?

NB Please do not mention real names in your reply. What interests us is the nature of relationship you have with someone, so can say "my mother", "my youngest nephew" etc, or use initials.

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2. Receiving presents

Who gives you presents? It might help to make a list of the presents you received in the last year, together with a note about who gave them to you and what the occasion was, plus your own reactions to what you received.

What was the best present you ever received in your life (so far)? Who gave it to you?

What would be your ideal present to receive if money were no object?

Can you end this section by commenting in general about what present-giving and receiving means to you, and what significance you feel it has in everyday life?

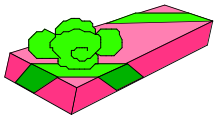
3. Wedding presents

Most of this section applies to people who have got married. However, if you are unmarried, please do feel free to comment on the questions in relation to the experiences of your friends and relatives.

YOUR WEDDING PRESENTS

Please start by giving the year of your wedding, and if you have been married more than once, please give answers for each separate occasion. Please also briefly describe the kind of wedding you had, whether it was religious or civil. If religious, it would help to have some background about your faith, and any traditions which affected present-giving.

You might find it helps to do a sort of list. We realise it may be a long time ago, so anything you can remember would be helpful.



What gifts did you receive? Please be as detailed as possible - if you can recall not only the items, but also the make and design of objects, that would be appreciated.

Who gave you gifts? Close family? Friends? Employers? Colleagues?

When did you receive them? At the wedding, before or after?

Did you have a formal list? How was it organised?

Which gifts have you kept? When are they used and where do you keep them?

What memories do they hold for you?

Were you ever given gifts of money? Or second-hand things, like furniture?

Did you collect things for your married household? Did you have a 'bottom-drawer'? And what things did you buy for you new home? Were these things different from your gifts?

FAMILY WEDDING PRESENTS

Do you keep any of parents' wedding presents? Or wedding presents given to other members of your family? When are they used and where are they kept?

PART TWO
Staying well and everyday life

Please remember to start with your M-O number and a brief autobiography: your sex, age, town, marital status & occupation.

This section is about what you need to stay well, and what you think undermines your own health - or other people's. We are especially interested to hear about your recent experience over, say, the last year or so.

Please start by choosing the category below that best applies to you and writing it at the top of your reply.

- employed full-time
- employed part-time
- working in the home as a carer of children or other dependents
- working from home
- retired because of my age
- off work because of sickness or disability
- unemployed
- self-employed
- studying or training full time
- other - please give details

- This is a question about the environments in which you live and work. What aspects of your day-to-day life make you feel well or unwell ? (In thinking about this, you might include things like relationships with other people, financial constraints or hardships, as well as your physical surroundings).

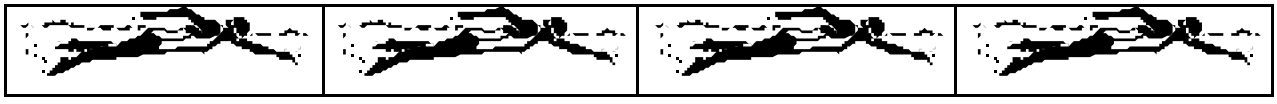
- When you feel unwell, how do you decide when to stop and rest, and when to keep going?

- Please write about the last time that you had to take 'time off' work (whether paid or unpaid). Was it a straighforward decision and, if not, what did you have to think about before taking time off ?

  Remember that we would really like to hear about your *recent* experience, whether you are employed or retired, working in or outside home.

- Some people talk about 'wear and tear' as a natural part of getting older, with pain and discomfort being inevitable. What do you think about this, and do ideas like this affect what you do when you feel unwell ?

- Feel free to add any other comments on this theme which relate to your own experience or to other people close to you.



Please turn over for our News section

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVE NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVE NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVE

New Premises
We are now settled into a suite of rooms on the top floor of the University Library. We have an enormous new store room which, thanks to the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, is at the right temperature and humidity level for the storage of paper and photographs. Your directive replies should last a long time now! The store is next door to our offices so we don't have far to go to get boxes out for researchers. We have two rooms for our researchers, one large enough for group visits and seminars. This week we hosted our first visitors - a group of GCSE students studying evacuation during the Second World War, and the first meeting of the 18 postgraduate students who are taking the new MA in Life History Research which includes a course (taught by me) exclusively devoted to Mass-Observation. We are gradually purchasing the equipment (also Lottery-funded) to assist with teaching and public events. By the way, do remember that you are most welcome to visit us at the Archive. Just phone first.

Saying goodbye
The sad news is, however, that we lost three members of staff at the end of September when the grant to set up a Website on the Internet and digitise our catalogues and indexes finished. Julie Applin had been at the Archive for at least four years. She began as a volunteer helper and then was offered a post when we were awarded the grant. Tim Graves was employed on the same project and was with us for three very fruitful years. Rob Skinner spent only three months with us but in that time sorted all our material on the Coronation of 1953 and our "Gambling Study 1947" boxes as well as editing and producing our Annual Newsletter for Friends. I am pleased to report that Tim and Julie have been appointed to permanent posts in the rest of the Library, and Rob has begun an MA course at Sussex, so they are not far away but, alas, they are no longer able to help us in the Archive.

How being an Archive Friend helps us
That leaves only the three of us (me, Joy and Judy), and our volunteer helpers who help out on a one day a week basis. As a result we have reluctantly reduced our opening hours and dropped some of our areas of work. I will be applying for more funds to support staff salaries but, for the moment, we are rather a small (but extremely well-housed and well-equipped) unit. As you can imagine, the support we receive from our Archive Friends is even more essential than usual. If you are not a Friend, or have let your subscription lapse, please think about joining. Let us know when you reply to the directive and we will send you an application form. The Archive Annual Newsletter for Friends is now available.

New books relating to M-O
We have enclosed a leaflet about an M-O diary from the war years written by Edward Stebbing. Mr Stebbing kept a copy of his diary and has now edited it as a book for publication. You can either order it from the publisher, from a bookshop, or suggest your local library obtains a copy. I hope it inspires you.
You may also like to know that Jane Mace, who collaborated on the "Mothers and Literacy" Winter 1995 Directive, has now published her research as a book called *Playing with time: mothers and the meaning of literacy*. It costs £13.95 in paperback and has been published by UCL Press. There are lots of references to M-O in it. You should be able to order it through a good bookshop.

Labels
There should be three labels enclosed with this directive. Please write on each one your name and postal address and send us back just one with your directive reply. Keep the others for sending with the next two directive. We will use it to let you know your directive reply has arrived. Can you please make sure that you write your address on the correct side of the label (NOT the shiny side) or it is quite useless to us!

DS/26 October 1998/Dir.No.55