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| Matthew Chambers, University of Lodz  Ian Walker, University of Wales, Newport | | | |

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| **Your article** |
| Mass Observation |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Mass Observation was founded in 1937 by film-maker Humphrey Jennings, poet Charles Madge, and ethnologist and explorer Tom Harrisson. It was originally conceived as a project to capture the dominant image of the day by collecting reports and observing people’s behaviour. The group was influenced by filmic montage, André Breton’s writing on coincidence and the surrealist image, and Bronislaw Malinowski’s theories of ‘participatory observation’ in anthropology. The movement’s methodology quickly evolved from a surrealist-inspired experiment into a more scientifically-orthodox project that was pursued on a wide-scale until 1949. Mass Observation had three distinct periods: an early interdisciplinary period that can be related to Jennings’s involvement; a further period when following Jennings’s departure and Malinowski’s essay in *First Year’s Work*, Mass Observation pursued a more orthodox scientific approach; and a final stage which saw its collaboration with the Ministry of Information and eventual transformation into a market research firm. |
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| Further reading:  (Calder and Sheridan)  (Cross)  (Hubble)  (Sheridan, Street and Bloome)  (Spender)  (Walker) |