LITERACY

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INTRODUCTION
Prior to representing an important topic of academic inquiry and a central issue of national and international policy, literacy defines the conditions of possibility for any disciplinary or policy enterprise. Literacy also plays a central role in social and institutional functioning while at the same time holding significance at the personal level. Literacy has become a trope of modernity and a metaphor for our relationship with the world. This bibliographic entry traces the emergence of literacy as a scientific subject and the different theoretical perspectives that have developed the field of literacy studies. Undoubtedly, literacy as a field of study has always been multidisciplinary, where the contributions of historians, anthropologists, psychologists, linguists, folklore scholars, educational researchers, and
literary critics have converged and collided. The emergence of literacy as a scientific subject is primarily associated to work of anthropologists, psychologists and classicists who conceived of literacy as a “technology of the intellect.” Such a perspective characterized literacy as a causal, transformative force, deemed to propel advancements in societal organization and individual cognition of unprecedented import. Our understanding of literacy has shifted towards a situated perspective, which acknowledges the socio-cultural and ideological nature of reading and writing, in light of momentous ethnographic and historical work carried out since the late 1970s. No longer thought of as necessarily promoting societal progress and cognitive sophistication, literacy is appraised for its involvement in the reproduction of power relationships, and its role in forming identities and subjectivities as well as institutions. The increasingly digitalized and globalized world induces not only novel contexts for literacy research, but also new definitions and theoretical orientations. In reconsidering the situatedness of literacy practices in light of contemporary mobility of agents and texts, literacy scholars are offering new insights on the material and symbolic aspects of textual practices. Undoubtedly the study of literacy will continue to be central to our efforts to illuminate the dynamics of meaning making, human sociality and cultural processes.

In terms of its structural and thematic organization, this bibliography begins with key comprehensive overviews which describe the trajectory of literacy research with attention to anthropological concerns, followed by a sampling of prominent *Journals* featuring articles on reading, writing, and literacy. Then, the *Historical Studies* section lists several essential general histories as well as significant historical case studies of literacy in diverse periods and peoples, exhibiting the variety and complexity of reading technologies and practices throughout time. In *Tracing the Literacy Debate* a contemporary era of literacy research is set in motion by a number of books and articles claiming literacy as the momentous cause of significant cognitive and societal shifts in human history. Those works, as well as critiques of their claims, are included here. Following from those critiques is a *Social Practice* approach generated at least partly in reaction to those claims, situating the meanings and effects of literacy more carefully in particular socio-cultural contexts and in part shaped by local ideologies; included in this section are theoretical formulations, exemplary monographs, and collections of studies. The literacy debate also advanced claims about orality and literacy, which have become another point of departure as numerous studies have complicated the relationship between *Oral and Written Language*. These reflections on communicative modalities have intersected with social practice perspectives in scholarly efforts to track the enormous changes to literacy wrought by an age of new media. In *Emerging Texts and Contexts*, multilingualism, multimodalities, and multiliteracies provide reconsiderations of literacy in the context of the contemporary intensification of migration and media. Then, this bibliography turns to another distinctive line of work in literacy studies, namely the *Critical Literacy* perspective, attentive to the dimensions of power and ideology in the pedagogy and practice of literacy. Critique of literacy requires investigating *Schooling*, the institution most closely allied to its scope and reproduction. Thus, the bibliography ends with a set of texts exploring the profound relationships between literacy and schooling.
GENERAL OVERVIEWS
This section includes several overviews of the field of literacy studies. Collins 1995 concisely retraces divergent, influential approaches to literacy theory before introducing a synthetic perspective, and is a useful starting point. A more inclusive, article-length review is provided by Bartlett et al 2011, who draw on Collins’ categories but also discuss critical literacy and more recent concerns. Street and Hornberger 2008 is a fuller-length volume introduction, covering a broad range of topics, with an emphasis on education related issues. For an overview that also interrogates the construct of literacy from epistemological perspective, the readers are invited to consider Brockmeier, Wang and Olson 2002.

This collection covers a broad range of topics through the perspectives of historians, anthropologists, linguists, and educational researchers. In addition to key theoretical frameworks the volume offers insightful studies of literacy practices in educational institutions as well as other social settings, in an impressive variety of geographical areas (including Africa, Australia, Latin America, Nepal, the UK and USA.)

A thoughtful review of most influential strands of anthropological research on literacy and their contribution to discerning literacy’s relationship to structures of power, language, identities, and technology.

An influential review that draws on a poststructuralist approach to discuss the contribution of historical and ethnographic research to the articulation of the relationships between literacy and power, epistemology, and social formations.

An important contribution to the multi-disciplinary study of literacy, this collection suggests a perspective on texts as cultural artifacts and literacy as a form of cultural organization itself. Such cultural theory of literacy is articulated in this volume through historical and developmental analyses.

JOURNALS
Many peer-reviewed journals directly or frequently address literacy. The journals listed here address literacy with concerns and approaches more relevant to anthropology; many journals about literacy from an exclusively educational perspective have been left off. Reading Research Quarterly and Written Communication are reputed, quarterly journals that often publish indispensible articles in literacy studies. Anthropology and Education...
Quarterly’s articles broadly examine schooling and education, but as contributions to an American Anthropological Association journal, more consistently apply an anthropological approach. Journals also narrow in on more specific areas of literacy research, such as the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, and *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*. Too numerous to list are the journals dedicated to reading, composition, and rhetoric specifically in educational contexts; *Literacy* is a notable example from the UK. *Studies in Written Language and Language* as well as *Journal of Literacy Research* has more comprehensive transatlantic coverage. Finally, many journals concerned with literacy are (self-consciously) taking advantage of the wider accessibility to texts offered by electronic publication; *Community Literacy Journal* is explicitly interested in these diversifying ways of reading in its dissemination as well as its content.

*Reading Research Quarterly*[http://www.reading.org/general/publications/journals/rrq.aspx]*.
International in scope (published by the International Reading Association), multidisciplinary and methodologically diverse, *Reading Research Quarterly* is a leading journal in literacy studies. Full articles available online.

*Written Communication*[http://wcx.sagepub.com/]*. The focus of this prestigious quarterly journal is writing, and contributors come from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary orientations. Notably, studies in this journal are not limited to particular populations or institutional contexts.

*Anthropology & Education Quarterly*[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1548-1492]*.
This American Anthropological Association journal (not limited to the US) contains studies utilizing ethnographic methods to address educational issues, theoretical and applied, including literacy and related topics.

*Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*[http://edl.sagepub.com/]*. The *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* has a more of a developmental, psychological emphasis, but contains indispensable research for those interested in children’s literacy.

*Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*[http://www.reading.org/general/publications/journals/jaal.aspx]*.
This journal is oriented toward applied educational practice, but this International Reading Association monthly publication contains commentaries and research relevant to adult literacy learning from recognized literacy scholars.

*Studies in Written Language and Literacy*[http://benjamins.com/#catalog/journals/wll]*. More balanced with transatlantic scholarship, this journal includes linguistic and sociolinguistic examinations of literacy, learning, and culture. Though the journal includes many studies of linguistic orientation, its papers are often social and cultural as well.
*Journal of Literacy Research*[http://jlr.sagepub.com/]*
An interdisciplinary journal that publishes research related to literacy, language, and literacy and language education from preschool through adulthood. Article abstracts are made available in 7 languages (English, Spanish, French, German, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese).

Like *Critical Literacy* more generally, this journal joins theory and pedagogical practice, invites interdisciplinary perspectives with a common critical orientation connecting literacy and power, and intends to be global in bases.

*Literacy*[http://www.ukla.org/publications/literacy/]*
Like many journals excluded from this list, *Literacy* has a strong emphasis on the practice and policy of literacy education, but its presence serves to highlight the vast array of meaningful research on literacy being done by educators and professional associations (in this case, the UK Literacy Association).

*Community Literacy Journal*[http://www.communityliteracy.org/index.php/clj]*.
Exemplifies many trends in many of the newer venues for peer-reviewed publications: a broader spectrum of approaches, an interest in collaborations of practice and research, online publishing and access, and particular interest in both new media and contexts for literacy apart from traditional education and workplace ones.

**HISTORICAL STUDIES**

**General histories**
This section aims to offer a selection of historical studies that approach literacy as social practice. In other words, the references we selected consider the historicity of ways of engaging with texts, manners of reading and writing and their situated meanings. Thus, exemplary work on the history of the book, on the development of various genres of texts, and contributions associated to bibliography and paleography proper are not included in this bibliography. While never claiming or aiming to offer a comprehensive historical account of reading and writing from their inception to contemporary time, the contributions included in this section span several centuries and geographical areas. Cavallo and Chartier 1999 and Graff 1987 overview literacy in the West from antiquity to the present, the former volume emphasizing the differing contexts of writing and reading, the latter arguing against an oversimplified “literacy myth.” Mignolo 1995 offers a thought-provoking perspective on how literacy is implicated in the Western colonial project. Resnick 1983 provides important balance by also considering non Western cultural traditions in this collection of studies. Kaestle 1985 focuses on the history of literacy in the United States, proposing an approach that accounts for everyday readers and everyday reading.

A collection of studies reconstructing the various ways of reading that have been characteristic of Western societies from classical antiquity to the present.


An ambitious historical overview that spans from the origins of Western literacy to the “today and tomorrow” of literacy, aiming to demonstrate that definitions and functions of literacy cannot prescind from an analysis of the social and historical contexts in which they are situated.


A provocative essay that urges historians to study the uses of literacy in everyday life, that is to construct a history of readers and a history of literacy as social practice.


An influential reflection on the connections between writing, social organization and power. Drawing from literature, semiotics, history and cultural theory, Mignolo reveals how European forms of literacy were implicated in the colonization of the New World. An important historical foundation for *Critical Literacy*.


A collection of studies spanning different centuries and cultural traditions, including nineteenth century China, seventeenth century England and New England, and imperial Russia. A thought-provoking essay on literacy and schooling in subordinate cultures by anthropologist John U. Ogbu is included in the volume.

**CASE STUDIES**

**Case studies of literacy, technology, and context**

These historical case studies, largely focused on Western development of literacy, illuminate the complex relationship among literacy, the technologies that shaped textual forms and practices, and the sociocultural contexts in which reading and writing were embedded. Among studies of Middle Ages literacy, Innes 1998 describes an individual monk’s biography and literacy to examine the relationship between memory and written records, a relationship Clancy 1979 examines to propose the birth of a literate mentality. This notion of incipient literacy in the Middle Ages restructuring thought is also central to Stock 1983, and as later sections of this bibliography describe, important to the concerns of literacy scholars interested in history and the present. Chartier 1994 and Eisenstein 1979 are helpful for understanding the development of literacy, textual production and practices, and social and political impacts in the period leading up to modernity. Kaestle et al 1991, though focusing on the US, illustrates the historical development of contemporary literacy.
concerns, and Saenger 1997 offers historical account for the main manner of modern reading, solitarily and silently with a text.

Chartier, Roger. 1994. *The order of books*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Examines the mechanisms and practices devised in Western Europe between the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century to regulate increasing production and distribution of texts. Contains three essays, on the rules for the formation of communities of readers, the figure of the author, and the meaning of the library respectively.


Eisenstein, Elizabeth L. 1979. *The printing press as an agent of change: Communications and cultural transformations in early modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Influential examination of the shift from manuscript culture to printed communication. After a detailed overview of main characteristics of the introduction of printing, the second section relates the script-to-print shift to three historical developments: the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the rise of modern scientific thought.


Innes, Mathew. 1998. Memory, orality and literacy in an early medieval society. *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* 158: 3-36. Through analysis of the life and literary work of Notker, a 9th-century monk who endeavored to write down the deeds of Charlemagne from materials that had been orally transmitted over at least one generation, this study sheds light on the fascinating interrelationship between social memories and their means of transmission.


The author traces the emergence of the predominant modern habit of reading, that is, solitary and silent involvement with text, and connects it to changes in writing techniques as well as social ideologies.


Drawing from anthropology, literary theory, and history, this book explores the influence of literacy on eleventh and twelfth-century life and mentality. The author argues that medieval and early modern literacy did not simply supplant oral tradition but created a new type of interdependence between the oral and the written.

**Case studies of literacy in diverse communities**

Case studies of literacy also offer evidence for the significant presence and function of textual practices in communities overlooked or misrepresented as illiterate, as in Greene’s 1994 account of Spanish literacy in the Americas and McHenry and Heath’s 1994 recovering of the literate presence in early African American communities. Barletta’s 2008 study of 16th Century Spanish Muslims, Boyarin’s 1992 analysis of the reading of Hebrew Scriptures, Jaffee’s 2001 exploration of Torah among ancient Palestinian Jews, and Sterponi’s 2008 study of medieval devotional practices all focus on vital literacy contexts involving reading of sacred texts and the interface between the religious and the social in various historical locations.


Careful analysis of key texts translated, copied and circulated within reading communities of crypto-Muslim minorities within sixteenth-century Aragon (Spain). Presents fundamental practices of text performance and mediation that these scribal and lectoral traditions engaged as mode of resistance and survival throughout a period of persecution and forced conversion.


On the basis of sophisticated textual analysis, this essay engages ancient and modern claims and ideas surrounding the practice of reading as they apply or question mainstream ideas about engagement and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

The author provides evidence of the wide spread of literacy in Spanish during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Mexico, Central America, and the U.S. south. Ethnic and social groups traditionally excluded from literacy accounts are given due literate recognition.


Studies complex relationships of oral tradition to texts among Palestinian Jews from Second Temple period into Late Antiquity. While only books were regarded as authoritative, oral tradition was necessary for their interpretation. Argues that ideology of oral transmission – “Torah in the Mouth” – served to legitimate the institution of rabbinc discourse.


This article provides a corrective to the emphasis on oral roots of African American language and literary practices by documenting the activity and influence of African American literary societies and journals over the course of a century.


Through examining pedagogical treatises that provided instruction on the medieval practice of reading the book of hours, interwoven with semiotic analysis of textual and illustrational features of those texts, this essay reconstructs a prominent practice of reading in medieval Christian tradition fostering involvement with text as meditative and prayerful activity.

TRACING THE LITERACY DEBATE
Beginning from the 1960’s, various anthropologists, media theorists, cultural historians, and other scholars produced a set of landmark works positing literacy as more than merely a significant tool of communication, but as a causal, transformative, and epoch-marking force on society, cognition, language, and consciousness. Taken together, many of these early works can be said to have introduced a “literacy thesis,” a set of staggering claims of literacy’s significance that would have to be taken seriously (incorporated or refuted) by any studies of modern culture and society (see *General Overviews*). These works initiated and elevated consideration of literacy in contemporary scholarship.

The literacy thesis
The “literacy thesis” had its seeds in studies of classical Greek oratory and literacy by Havelock 1963 and in new recognitions of the expansive effects of media technologies by McLuhan 1962, but found its most concentrated and bold statement in Goody and Watt 1963, in which (particularly alphabetic) literacy was shown to have encompassing cognitive, organizational, and epistemological consequences the world over. This strong thesis, though later qualified and mitigated by many of its proponents, nevertheless provided the basis for Goody’s 1977 and 1986 anthropological work on literacy’s rise and
role in civilization, Olson’s 1977 and 1994 works on the far-reaching cognitive impacts of literacy, and Ong’s 1982 studies of the oral-literate divide, and served as a major point of departure for later perspectives of literacy.

In his typically entrancing and eclectic fashion, McLuhan pioneers the idea of modes of communication as entirely new environments—or here, galaxies—for human society, with far-ranging consequences. This early statement of the influence of literacy on society presents print technologies as transformative for “typographic man.”

Often credited—or attacked—as the seminal articulation of the Literacy Thesis. Contrasts oral and written culture, narrates literacy’s ascent (particularly Greek alphabetic) and its impacts on communication, cognition, categorization, critique, culture, and civilization, and argues that the oral-literate divide is the epochal distinction most important to human sciences.

Havelock enters the conversation about orality and literacy by explaining Plato’s objections to poetry representing “oral thought” and linking Platonic self-reflection and organization of object knowledge to the advent of 5th century Greek literacy. The first of several works where Havelock develops theories of Greek and Western literacy’s consequences.

Gives nuance to the division of orality and literacy; attributes complexity to oral cultures. Ong’s reflections on “oral literature”, print, and sound-versus-sight proved to be unique, persuasive, and generative, showing his debt to his teacher Marshall McLuhan’s fascination with the power of technologies and media to alter people and society.

Goody further extends the argument from Goody and Watt 1963, focusing more directly on differing modes of communication as a mechanism over against advanced/primitive or savage/civilized dichotomies of societies.

Utilizing archaeological evidence from the Ancient Near East and ethnographic data from West Africa, develops the argument of Goody and Watt 1963 to examine different aspects of society, like economics and law, changing with the advent of...
writing. Cautiously avoids presenting literacy as entirely causative, but makes substantially similar arguments.

Marks historical trajectory from oral to literate, tracing shifts of meaning from extrinsic, contextual, and referential, associated with speech/"utterance," to intrinsic, explicit, and autonomous, associated with writing/"text," culminating in the British essayist tradition, with implications for language, comprehension, and learning. First of Olson’s many contributions to literacy scholarship.

This multi-disciplinary synthesis is representative of Olson’s progression, reasserting the claims of the Literacy Thesis mitigated by its counterarguments (See also *Seminal Critiques*), attributing the difference that literacy makes to the development of a literacy culture based on representing authorial intentions in text and practices of interpretation developed by readers.

**Seminal critiques**
Though the provocative assertions of the Literacy Thesis would be moderated by many of their authors, most notably Jack Goody and David Olson, the critiques of grand claims about literacy’s effects not only tempered those claims but also provided the bases of alternative approaches to the study of literacy. Some critiques addressed the empirical grounds of Literacy Thesis arguments, such as Gough’s 1968 account of literacy in Asian contexts and Harris’ 1989 discussion of Greek writing and thought. Others challenged the conceptual generalizations, such as Finnegan’s 1973 work on the orality-literacy divide and Scribner and Cole’s 1978 experimental study attempting to distinguish literacy’s effects from schooling. Scribner and Cole 1978, Heath 1980, and Street 1984 would not only criticize the Literacy Thesis’ ambitions, but also develop a contrasting point of view with a different set of methods for investigating literacy in society (See *Literacy as a Social Practice*).

Gough’s testing of Goody and Watt’s 1963 consequences of literacy against the script, history, and thought of China and India mitigates their claims, challenging the causal role of alphabetic systems; the impact of literacy on myth, linearity, science; Western categorizations of knowledge; and democratizing effects of literacy on political structures.

Many have not only adopted Finnegan’s characterization of the Literacy Thesis as a “Great Divide,” but her critiques of its dichotomous simplifications.

To isolate the consequences of literacy from the consequences of schooling, this study of Liberia’s Vai people, whose writing system is learned without schooling institutions, finds that instead of automatic cognitive effects proposed by Olson 1977 (See also *The Literacy Thesis*), literacy’s influence is linked to the social practices in which literacy is embedded.


The first half of this book presents Street’s salvo against what he terms the “autonomous model” of literacy, combing through the generalizing claims advanced by Goody, Olson, and earlier linguists to show that they belong, in fact, to particular ideological contexts. He poses his alternative, an “ideological model” (see also *Literacy as Social Practice.*)


Heath challenges the universal claims of the Literacy Thesis, and the simplistic assumptions of school-based literacy endeavors, by describing the unique and specific uses of literacy captured by ethnographic study of communication in an African American, working-class community. A precursor to her 1983 work, *Ways with Words* (See also *Social Practice/Monographs*).


A critique of the overreach of “romantic” notions of literacy’s consequences, this essay specifically attacks the leap from Greek alphabetic literacy to exceptional mental faculties. Instead, Harris argues that writing provides an “autoglotlic space” that allows for language to be surveyed “unsponsored” by speakers, with political and social implications.

**SOCIAL PRACTICE**

In reaction to the literacy thesis and the embedded conceptualization of reading and writing as technologies, independent of social context and endowed with inherent cognitive potential, has emerged an ethnographically informed perspective on literacy, which characterizes it as a practice, ideologically shaped, socioculturally organized and historically contingent.

**Theoretical formulations**

The references included in this section articulate the theoretical underpinnings of the new trend of studies that look at literacy as a social practice. Barton 1994 and Street 1993 highlight the ideological nature of literacy in their presentations of the approach known as New Literacy Studies. Szwed 1981 and de Certeau 1984 emphasize the importance of exploring the ordinary, the former outlining ethnographic method and the latter providing
a rich theoretical material. Barton and Papen 2010 is an edited volume containing dialogues and syntheses of the New Literacy Studies and the Anthropology of Writing.

An introduction to literacy studies that examines theories of language and learning underpinning sociocultural views of literacy as well as methods for researching literacy practices.

In this introductory essay to his book, Street overviews different conceptualizations of literacy throughout the discipline’s history and puts forth a model that frames literacy not as an autonomous nor neutral technology but instead as a practice shaped by structures of power and ideology.

The author argues for the study of literacy as a social practice and invites the extension of focus beyond text to function and context. The essay discusses also a set of methodological tools for studying literacy in its everyday settings.

In this very influential book, the eclectic and erudite social scientist Michel de Certeau discerns devices, actions, and procedures that ordinary people use in their every day in order to subvert the hegemonic systems of meaning-making. Among the practices examined by the author are reading and writing.

This book brings together two distinct research traditions on writing, the Anthropology of Writing developed prevalently in France and the NLS developed in the UK, North America and other English speaking countries. Its 11 chapters offer illustrations of most prominent themes and theoretical frameworks of the two traditions and attempt to open a dialogue and cross fertilization between them.

Monographs
Exemplary studies of literacy practices are featured in this section. Influential anthropological works include Ahearn’s 2001 study of love letter writing in Nepal, Besnier’s 1995 ethnography of literacy introduced by missionaries in a Polynesian society, Heath’s 1983 ethnography of communication among Southern towns separated ethnically and economically, and Messick’s 1993 examination of literacy and authority in Islamic Yemen. These anthropological studies are presented along with contributions of cultural
psychologists Scribner and Cole 1981, testing for the influence of literacy on schooled and non-schooled Vai peoples in Liberia; literacy scholars Barton and Hamilton 1998, detailing often overlooked vernacular literacies in Lancaster, England; a folklore scholar, Shuman 1986, documenting oral and written discourses of adolescent girls in an urban American city; and cultural studies scholar Radway 1984, tracking the reading practices of romance novel fans in a small town. These monographs exhibit the fruits of a situated, social practice approach to literacy study.


Linguistic and sociocultural anthropologist documents an incipient literacy practice in Junigau, Nepal: love letter correspondence. Through an engaging ethnographic account, the author examines how literacy is closely linked to processes of social transformation (marriage practices in Ahearn’s study) both as result of and catalyst for those shifts in social practices.


In this book the authors document the uses of reading and writing in Lancaster, England in the 1990s. Particular attention is devoted to the analysis of vernacular literacies, which the authors argue are often devalued and disregarded, especially within public discourse and education policy.


A fascinating case study of the shift from a non-literate into literate society of Nukulaelae (of Tuvalu in the Polynesian Central Pacific). Combining comparative and event-centered ethnographic methods, illuminates the relationship between newly acquired literacy introduced by missionaries and transformations in social relationships, conception and experiencing of gender and personhood.


This classic study provides a rich and nuanced ethnographic documentation of the ways young children are apprenticed to make meaning with words, oral and written, in three communities in the Piedmont Carolinas. A landmark study about relationships between oral and written language uses, language and schooling, language and literacy socialization.


In this book, Messick seeks to reconstruct two interrelated discursive practices in highland Yemen, both at the local-level and in the larger cultural-historical frame of Islam (and Islamic jurisprudence in particular): the constitution of authority in texts and the social and political processes involved in articulating the authority of texts.

This seminal contribution to the study of popular genres of literature, and readership and audiences combines interviews, informal discussions, and questionnaires, illuminating the act of reading and its relationship to ideological and cultural orders as well as economic forces that shape the composition, dissemination and fruition of texts.

A highly influential study combining ethnography with experimental procedures and documents Vai (Liberia) literacy activities that engage multiple writing systems, languages, and learning contexts. The results suggest limited and specific, rather than significant and extensive, effects of literacy on cognition; the authors propose conceptualizing literacy as social practice.

A sophisticated study within the ethnography of communication tradition, with rich discourse and narrative analyses of different forms of textual practices, notably personal diaries, collaborative writings, and oral narratives, and the role they play in constructing the social world of adolescent girls at an inner city Philadelphia junior high school.

**Collections**
Numerous collections of new literacy studies have been published since the mid 1980s. Those included in this section present a variety of foci: developmental (Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986), cross-cultural (Street 1993 and Street 2001), institutional (Barton et al. 2000; Cook-Gumperz 1986). Cook-Gumperz 1986 features studies that take a view of literacy as socially constructed to examine the problems that arise mostly in school-based literacy. Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986 illuminates literacy acquisition through ethnographic studies across multiple contexts. Street 1993 articulates the contours of the new literacy studies and assembles exemplary practice-based, ethnographic accounts from diverse locations, while Barton et al. 2000 investigates a diversity of institutional contexts rather than geographical ones. Street 2001 also collects a wide representation of studies, this time narrowing in on the ideological aspects of literacy policies and programs in different parts of the world.

Within the new literacy studies, this collection offers ethnographic studies of literacy practices in wide-ranging institutional contexts (the classroom, prison, and livestock auction). Contributors engage thought-provoking issues, like visual/material aspects of literacy, concepts of time and space, and the role of literacy practices in identity formation within communities of practice.

An outstanding collection of studies that focuses on the social and cultural contexts and processes involved in the acquisition of literacy. The contributors to this volume share an ethnographic approach to the study of reading and writing and advance our understanding of literacy acquisition as socialization.

Contributors to this volume apply anthropological and linguistic perspectives on language use to address enduring educational problems, notably unequal access to instructional opportunities and school achievement. As a whole, this collection advances a perspective on literacy as a socially constructed phenomenon, with normative and moral valences.

A collection of ethnographic accounts of literacy practices from a wide range of geographical locations, including Africa, Great Britain, Madagascar, Polynesia, and the United States. It contains an introductory essay by Brian Street, in which the author traces the emergence of the new literacy studies and their theoretical underpinnings.

A collection of case studies of literacy projects from around the world that not only document everyday uses of literacy but also illuminate culturally situated and ideologically shaped meanings of literacy as they inform and resist literacy programs and policies.

**Critiques and reformulations**
The prior sections’ articulations of the social practice approach in general and the New Literacy Studies in particular have been critiqued for overemphasizing or misrecognizing the contexts of literacy. Brandt and Clinton 2002 represents one influential attempt to reformulate some of the linchpin concepts of new literacy studies. Reder and Davila 2005 and Barton and Hamilton 2005 render similar critiques based on rethinkings of context, agency, and actors and artefacts. Lewis et al 2007’s extensions to the social practice perspective engage critical theory-based arguments that that makes this contribution also fitting for the selections on *Critical Literacy*.

This essay offers a critical appraisal of the social practice model of literacy by arguing that the influential impact given to the local contexts in defining meaning and forms of literacy practices within that model underestimates the transcontextualized and transcontextualizing potentials of literacy.

This essay considers and further articulates recent critiques of NLS as limited in their conceptualization of contextual dimensions relevant to literacy as cultural practice. The authors invite to discern the *polycontextuality* and *heterochronicity* of literacy practices, where agency is distributed across individuals and nonhuman artefacts.


The authors engage actor network theory and Wenger’s notion of reification to complicate notions of agency and context in new literacy studies. Their theorization offers insights into the relationships between different localities and timescales, as well as the material and symbolic nature of literacy artefacts.


A collection of theoretical essays and empirical papers that augments the sociocultural perspective on literacy by engaging critical theory to develop a framework that is no longer narrowly defined by social context. Also relevant for *Critical Literacy*.

**ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE**

The landmark works espousing the literacy thesis not only provoked the methodological questions that prompted the rise of the social practice approach, but also invigorated the discussion of differences, interdependences, and developments of oral and written modes. This section presents a selection of works on the similarities and differences between speech and writing and the relationship between the oral and the written. The scholarship represented is multidisciplinary, ranging from anthropology (Akinnaso 1982, 1985 and Philips 1975), psychology (Olson 1996), linguistics (Biber 1988 and Chafe and Tannen 1987), folklore (Finnegan 1988), and classics (Havelock 1986). Although employing different methods and articulating different arguments, all authors included in this section adopt a multidimensional and situated perspective on speech, reading and writing, which eschews technological determinism and categorical distinctions between oral and written language. In more recent decades, the proliferation of technologies of communication has prompted significant reconsidertions of modes that extend this discussion. See *A New Media Age*.


Drawing on sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, synthesizes findings about lexical and syntactic differences between spoken and written language. Argues that spoken and written language derive from the same semantic base and vary mainly
in choice and distribution of vocabulary and syntactic patterns in response to modality-specific pragmatic constraints.


Based on research on oral ritual communication in nonliterate societies, this paper challenges both the theoretical assumptions and the quantitative method underlying comparative studies of spoken and written language and proposes a sociolinguistic model that relates linguistic forms to macro-sociological contexts, communicative goal, and function.


The classicist scholar extends his reflection on the shift from orality to literacy from ancient Greece to contemporary time. While Havelock’s central focus is Greek literature and philosophy, he also offer his insights on modern technologies of communication and on the theories of Lévi-Strauss, Parry, McLuhan, Derrida, Ong, and others.


The author employs corpus linguistics analyses to elucidate similarities and differences across a wide range of spoken and written registers in English. The dimensional model articulated by Biber debunks the polarization of speech and writing and offer a more nuanced understanding of variation within and across communicative modalities.


The author examines communicative practices and their implications for human thought and action in a comparative and historical framework. Eschewing technological determining, Finnegan shows how information technology depends upon the social uses to which it is put.


This review essay examines the structural properties of written and spoken language and the contextual influences that shape and give meaning to use of these two linguistic modes. The authors eschew a dichotomous approach and emphasize the intersection of multiple social dimensions in spoken and written language use.


In this article Olson challenges the traditional view of phonemic writing as transcription of speech by claiming that writing provides a conceptual model for that speech. Writing is thus seen as metalinguistics.
EMERGING TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

In mundane and profound ways, the emergence of information and communication technologies and an increasingly globalized world induces not only new contexts for literacy research, but original definitions and theoretical orientations as well. As the technologies and media through which people communicate change, the boundaries of what counts as “literacy” are pressed, and much scholarship on literacy rests on the increasingly fuzzy borders between reading texts and other kinds of communication and expression in this age of new media. Simultaneously, the intensifying movement of people and texts heightens the relevance of multilingualism and the multiplicity of forms of literacy individuals encounter and must master.

A new media age

The growth of information and communication technologies has produced immediately apparent changes in writing and reading, and studies such as Dobson and Willinsky 2009 have attempted to capture the influence of such technologies. But further reflection on how profoundly reading and writing practices have marked modernity has yielded new insights into how their evolution forces us to rethink literacy and society. Kress 2003 and Carey and Kress 2003 exemplify this dual recognition of the watershed technological, societal moment and the expanding conceptions of reading and writing necessary to account for the contemporary proliferation of texts, their flows, their multimodality, and their production. Many proponents of the “New Literacy Studies” described in *Social Practice* have turned their attention to these changing practices, as Mills 2010 reviews. Hull and Nelson 2005 demonstrates that examining these new literacies has called for researchers, including ethnographers, to develop novel means to account for the texts themselves and the participants and spaces they study; Leander 2009 reconsiders ethnography in the online and offline spaces and offers important methodological and theoretical insights in contemporary literacy. Meanwhile, the chapters of Baynham and Prinsloo 2009 show that all this novelty does not simply outmode formerly dominant institutions and media of reading and writing, but interacts dynamically with them, ensuring that the field of literacy studies will remain vibrant and continuous amid these unremitting changes.

Chronologically reviewing the changes to literacy brought on by word processing, hypermedia, information and digital archives, and collaborative knowledge (such as Wikipedia), this article assembles scholarship tracking changes to fairly traditional notions of literacy without significantly re-theorizing literacy as other works represented in *A New Media Age*.

Kress traces how moving from print to screen and from text-centered to image-centered not only alters reading, but ramifies throughout textuality, communication, and semiosis in society. In addition, Kress builds out the concept of “multimodality,” the way that the increased prominence of a variety of ‘modes’ produces new “affordances.”

Jewitt and Kress have pioneered methods of using analytical tools of social semiotics to interpret the different forms of multi-modal texts becoming more prominent in the digital age. In this book, the authors demonstrate these methods as they describe various forms of literacy involving images, gesture, movement, and other signs.

A helpful literature review of the increasing focus on the changes brought on by digital technologies within the interdisciplinary New Literacy Studies (See *Social Practice* section).

Hull and Nelson demonstrate multimodal analysis in this study of a multimedia work of digital storytelling called “Lyfe-N-Rhyme” by an Oakland, California artist. An exemplar of conveying the “semiotic power of multimodality” through the textual medium of a journal article.

The entire volume features several relevant studies, but Leander’s chapter informatively reviews research of online networks in order to raise questions of how ethnographic study can examine texts and contexts moving across digital and non-digital spaces. Indicative of the ongoing efforts of literacy researchers examining changing landscapes of literacy.

This collection of chapters by scholars engaged in research on the rapidly changing modes, contexts, uses, and meanings of literacy provides a “state of the art” in the emerging present of the field.

**Multilingual literacies**

Multilingualism is not a new phenomenon but is being theorized in fresh and fecund ways in view of the increasingly mobilized nature of contemporary populations and lifeworlds. Emerging textual practices that traverse and connect different cultural and linguistic contexts compel to analyze and elucidate multilingual literacies. The New London Group 1996 represents the seminal reflection and theorization on multiliteracies, then further developed by Cope and Kalantzis 2000. Martin-Jones and Jones 2000 links literacy and multilingualism research to illuminate practices of reading and writing among multilingual and multi-ethnic groups. Hornberger 2003 offers a multidimensional theoretical framework that nuances our understanding of multiliteracy phenomena by connecting them to micro as well as macro processes. Collins and Sлемbrouck 2007, and Blommaert 2008 articulate illuminating and thought-provoking analyses of texts in their contexts of production and dissemination, with seminal insights on the dynamics of global connectedness and divide.


A group of literacy scholars convening in New London, Connecticut address the globalizing contexts and expanding expertise related to the production and proliferation of multimodal, multimedia, and multicultural text varieties, encapsulated in the term “multiliteracies.”


Through a detailed textual analysis, Blommaert illuminates the links between globalization and literacy regimes, showing how ‘grassroots’ texts, produced within local semiotic and social systems, lose their meaning, voice and scope when they are transposed to the global context.


Encapsulated in the word multiliteracies are two emerging phenomena that Cole and Kalantzis explore in this volume: the increasing multiplicity and integration of modes of meaning-making; and the increasing global connectedness, which makes local diversity more salient and lively than ever before.


This collection includes and builds on Hornberger’s theorization, which challenges simplistic perspectives of literacy in relation to bilingualism by articulating a
multidimensional model that elucidates key variables shaping multiliteracy phenomena.


Building on theoretical and methodological insights from literacy and multilingualism research (outlined in the first two introductory chapters, by Martin-Jones & Jones and Brian Street), this collection provides detailed accounts of everyday practices of reading and writing in different multilingual settings. The focus is primarily on the language and literacy experiences of children and adults in linguistic minority groups and multi-ethnic contexts in the UK.


In this article Collins and Slembrouck engage the concepts of indexicality, indexical orders and orders of discourse to articulate an analysis of multilingual literacy practices that highlights emerging dynamics of globalized localities.

CRITICAL LITERACY
Critical literacy scholarship attends to the political dimensions of literacy in contemporary societies, often along the lines of forms of critical theory or ideological critique. Literacy’s historical association with social development and modern institutions means that reading and writing practices are laden with ideological significance. Although critical literacy proponents question simplistic correlations between particularly dominant and institutionalized forms of literacy and notions of empowerment, freedom, or enlightenment, they also tend to maintain positions of concern or advocacy for literacies that advance critique, justice, or humanization.

Theory
Despite Paulo Freire’s attention to literacy in his path-breaking 1970 work (Freire 1970), it is better known for initiating the school of educational thought known as critical pedagogy, which was more conversant with social theory and political activism than with the contemporaneous advances and debates in literacy studies (as represented in the other sections of this bibliography). Where scholars did follow Freire’s articulation of literacy as instrumental to revolutionary change, such as in Lankshear and McLaren 1993 or Freebody and Luke 2003, they often did so with social theory or educational practice in mind. Nevertheless, those developments, as well as the syntheses of social practice perspectives with critical attention to politics and social change in Gee 2007 and Collins and Blot 2003 lead literacy scholars with a critical orientation to nuanced analyses of literacy’s role and power.


Cornerstone text of critical literacy. Freire’s description of dehumanizing, “banking” methods of education of oppressed peoples, his articulation of a “problem-posing”
consciousness and praxis through reading the word and the world, and the example of his adult literacy work in Brazil, paved the way for critical literacy's liberatory vision.


The “four resources” or “four roles” model developed here provides an example of the application of critical literacy in education. The model presents four social practices (coding practices, text-meaning practices, pragmatic practices, and critical practices) that are at least necessary if not sufficient in a critical literacy education.


By gathering a collection of essays including glimpses of critical literacy in practice throughout the world and from various theoretical and methodological perspectives, this volume advances the border-crossing edges of critical literacy.


Gee’s first edition of this book, published in 1990, presented a social practice view of literacy in the context of Discourse (languages that constitute particular social groups or communities) theories and analysis. Further editions clarified and developed an already influential and readable introduction to the ideological dimensions of literacy.


Charts a critical and anthropological alternative path through the Literacy Thesis (see also *The Literacy Thesis*) and situated, social practice (See also *Social Practice*) perspectives, attending to the historical development of state institutions like schooling, and influences on race, gender, and class. A crucial synthesis of contrasting perspectives of literacy under rubrics of power and identity.

**Studies**

Because of critical literacy’s emphasis on praxis, many of the empirical grounds for its scholarship are found in projects of political and social action. Freire and Macedo 1987 has no dearth of theory, but its bases are in the authors’ literacy work in South America and throughout the world. This kind of work was sometimes contiguous with, sometimes at odds with national and international efforts at promoting literacy for “development” or democracy (Lankshear and Lawler 1989), and the relationships between some version of transformative literacy and institutional education (Luke 2000) and global market forces (Gee et al. 1996) have remained the object of critical literacy’s scrutiny. Anthropological studies have often offered necessary complexity to the picture of how literacy functions in power relations, as in Dyer and Choksi 1998.

Presented as essays and dialogues co-written with Donaldo Macedo, Freire extends and elaborates on literacy as a theoretical discourse and the political praxis of emancipatory literacy, including observations from literacy campaigns where the authors have studied and worked.


Confronting misappropriations of the urge for mass literacy by proclaimers of a “literacy crisis,” the authors instead formulate a framework for an optimal functional literacy, an alternative to the stultifying and falsely neutral literacy of most schooling. Draws on examples from the Nicaraguan revolution, constructing a literacy for political transformation.


Alongside the lineage of Paulo Freire, critical literacy has also been informed by the work of Australian linguists and educators such as Luke, who provides an overview of theories of critical literacy and gives an account of its practice as an educational project in Australian public schools.


Analyzes the language and literacy suffusing a US corporation’s management literature and other texts for training and education, to critique new capitalism. Both an example of the critical reading of texts produced by critical literacy, and an exploration of implications for education and literacy of changes in the political economy.


One example of ethnographic studies (here, of Indian Rabari Nomads) that provide an empirical critique of the sometimes over-simplified association of literacy and empowerment that can be said to be critical literacy’s legacy, while exploring complexities of power in adult literacy in ways that contribute to critical literacy’s understanding.

**SCHOOLING**

Traditionally, schooling has been inherently associated with literacy instruction and development. Thus, though books and articles throughout this bibliography have addressed the link between literacy and schooling, this body of research is significant enough to warrant its own list of representative works. These references examine critically this relationship, on the one hand by questioning the assumption that literacy instruction
necessitates schooling, on the other hand by denouncing the biases of schooled literacy instruction. Historical (Cook-Gumperz 1986; Resnick 1990), ethnographic (Akinnaso 1992; Fisher 2006; Schieffelin 2000), sociolinguistic (Collins 1996) and discourse analytic (Michaels 1981; Sterponi 2007) studies feature in this section. Michaels 1981 is an example of ethnographic and discourse analytic studies that pointed out the cultural mismatches between students’ styles of language and narration with the dominant forms of schooled literacy preparation and acquisition activities. Critiques like these supported the argument of Cook-Gumperz 1986 that literacy, rather than a presumed, unequivocal good, is a socially constructed product of schooling. Resnick 1990 deepens this historical critique of schooled literacy, and Collins 1996 presents an empirical study of a class of children in an urban school that unveils the ideological and institutional dimensions of schooled literacy. Meanwhile, Akinnaso 1992 and Schieffelin 2000 provide important and often overlooked perspectives on literacy and schooling from non-Western societies. Finally, Fisher 2006 and Sterponi 2007 are representative of discoveries of literacy occurring in interactional ways and spaces orthogonal to the dominant organization of schools, the former in black bookstores and the latter in the peripheries of classroom life.


In this chapter, Cook-Gumperz examines literacy as both the purpose and product of schooling, and interrogates the assumption that the acquisition of literacy skill improves the quality of life for individuals, social groups, and society as a whole.


A critical historical analysis of how school-based literacy instruction has limited critical engagement with texts and pluralism of language practices, and disregarded the specific needs of the adolescent and the workspace.


This essay illuminates the relationship between institutionalized learning, language, and knowledge by considering comparatively literate and nonliterate societies. Akinnaso’s analysis debunks the dual assumption that schools specialize in literacy instruction and that literacy education is coterminous with formal education.


Through a case study of reading instruction in a third-grade classroom serving predominantly working-class African American students, Collins unveils the relations between participation and sequential unfolding of text-oriented interactions on the one hand and large-scale ideological formations and institutional practices on the other.

Ethnographic and discourse analytic study of “sharing time,” a preparatory activity for children’s entry into literacy, in an ethnically mixed first grade classroom. Mismatches between black children’s narrative style and teacher’s expectation for sharing time performances point to invisible cultural biases that threaten black children’s acquisition of schooled literacy.


In this chapter the author examines the friction between local language ideology and worldview in a small village in Papua New Guinea and those encoded in the literacy program brought to the village by Christian missionaries.


Reports insights from an ethnographic and discourse analytic study of children’s clandestine practice of interactional reading in an educational context where individual silent involvement with text is the teachers’ prescribed way of reading. Discusses the interface between the reproduction of literacy *habitus* and the tactical operations that produce its transformations.


This article examines the role of two African American-owned and -operated bookstores in the literacy practices and education of their participants. Fisher documents the active pursuit by African American individuals and families of alternative and supplementary knowledge spaces for literacy learning.