ROUTLEDGE LINGUISTICS CLASSICS

LOCAL LITERACIES

READING AND WRITING IN ONE COMMUNITY

'One of the best books on literacy
I have read in my career.'
David Bloome

DAVID BARTON
AND MARY HAMILTON

ROUTLEDGE

LOCAL LITERACIES

Praise for the original edition:

'One of the best books on literacy I have read in my career. I can see myself going back to this book again and again, learning more each time I read it . . . You can't leave the book without new insights about the nature of literacy in people's lives.'

David Bloome, *Vanderbilt University, USA*

'A classic text in New Literacy Studies, *Local Literacies* is used all over the world and provides both a methodological model and an example of the enactment of this model.'

Elsa Auerbach, *University of Massachusetts Boston, USA*

'Undoubtedly a classic text, *Local Literacies* has helped students, staff and the general public alike understand the far reaching implications of the term "literacy".'

Alexander Barratta, *University of Manchester, UK*

Local Literacies is a unique detailed study of the role of reading and writing in people's everyday lives. By concentrating on a selection of people in a particular community in Lancaster, England, the authors analyse how they use literacy in their day-to-day lives. It follows four people in detail examining how they use local media, their participation in public life, the role of literacy in family activities and in leisure pursuits. Links are made between everyday learning and education. The study is based on an ethnographic approach to studying everyday activities and is framed in the theory of literacy as a social practice.

This *Routledge Linguistics Classic* includes a new foreword by Deborah Brandt and a new framing chapter, in which David Barton and Mary Hamilton look at the connections between local and global activities, interfaces with institutional literacies, and the growing significance of digital literacies in everyday life.

A seminal text, *Local Literacies* provides an explicit usable methodology for both teachers and researchers, and clear theorising around a set of six propositions. Clearly written and engaging, this is a deeply absorbing study and is essential reading for all those involved in literacy and literacy education.

David Barton is Professor of Language and Literacy and Director of the Literacy Research Centre at Lancaster University, UK. He is series editor of the Routledge *Literacies* series and author and co-editor of numerous titles including *Literacy, Lives and Learning* (2007).

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LOCAL LITERACIES

Reading and writing in one community

David Barton and Mary Hamilton

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CONTENTS

ASIDES

FIGURES

FOREWORD

'Literacy between equals is just one sort of literacy.' Confronting that sentence in the opening pages of *Local Literacies* in 1998, I was seized by the disservice we do as teachers when we present reading and writing as frictionless engagements with a system of print abstracted from culture, politics, time, place, struggle, passion and, above all, change. Too often our ways of teaching skim the surface of our subject, minimising both the hurtful predicaments and the real pleasures that literacy learning represents to those who take it up. Then we wonder why so much teaching goes awry. Now in rightful reissue as a Routledge Linguistic Classic, *Local Literacies* is an engrossing ethnography that helps us confront our costly errors. It delivers a still urgent message to literacy researchers and teachers about what we need to know and where we need to look for knowledge.

Authors David Barton and Mary Hamilton lay out in bristling detail what they call an ecological approach to the study of literacy, set in everyday circumstances of Lancaster, England in the waning decades of the twentieth century. Through this approach, we are made curious about the signs of literacy – including, quite literally, street signs – that saturate the shared environment. But the aim is not so much to inventory the so-called functional print that people encounter. Rather it is to begin to ask questions about the forces of history, politics and economic struggle that bring these signs to bear on people's lives. How did they get there? What do they represent? The visual environment presents an initial set of clues for investigating literacy stasis and literacy change, literacy diversity and literacy inequalities. This approach allows us to appreciate what people must really decode in their encounters with print – not merely words but colliding and competing social systems in transformation.

Then we are invited along by Barton and Hamilton as they literally go knocking on the front doors of working-class homes in a Lancaster neighbourhood in the late twentieth century, asking residents to make their literacy practices available for inquiry. That so many people say yes is one of the most inspiring – and instructive – elements of this study, as if, at last, the people say, academia is ready to open its eyes to what is behind the

door of living literacy. Through the patience, understanding and inclusionary spirit of ethnographers Barton and Hamilton, the individuals in this study testify to how the less powerful capture powers of literacy and turn them, with effort, into beneficial resources for themselves and others. They show us why aiding such efforts must be the uncompromising aim of all literacy instruction.

Twenty-first-century readers of *Local Literacies* will continue to benefit from its message and be impressed by its relevance. When first published, this study changed the direction of literacy research, providing overwhelming, material evidence of how local contexts matter to the achievement of literacy and how cultural practices give literacy its point and meaning. These insights so infiltrated the field of literacy studies that they now risk appearing as ritual declarations, rather than, as Barton and Hamilton intended them, as starting place for rigorous investigations. Also, when published, this study took what was tacit about literacy (its matter-of-fact ordinariness) and made it palpable and complicated, showing how fragile literacy is, how it must be made and remade in place and only through exhaustive effort. It is a point worth revisiting as the tendency to take literacy for granted remains alluring and pernicious.

Above all, this study gives twenty-first-century readers much needed frameworks for approaching the radical changes that have occurred around literacy in the years since *Local Literacies* first appeared. The authors offer helpful perspectives in their new introduction. Still, the forecast for change is everywhere in the pages of the original study. The authors' prescient focus on literacy networks; their radically deep ecological perspective; their multicultural attentiveness; their historical awareness; their notice of the self-taught – all of these methodological features are abiding gifts to the twenty-first-century literacy scholar.

Deborah Brandt
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
September 2011

PREFACE

This book is a study of the uses of reading and writing in Lancaster, England in the 1990s. In writing this book we have three overlapping aims. Our first aim is to offer a detailed, specific description of literacy practices in one local community at one point in time. Second, the book makes a contribution to the theoretical understanding of literacy by linking literacy to a more general understanding of social practices and how people make sense of their lives through their everyday practices. The account that results from this project is often at odds with the public image of literacy to be found in the media and much current policy discourse. The book draws attention to vernacular literacies which are often hidden literacies, devalued and overlooked. In this way, it contributes to our final aim, which is to offer an alternative public discourse which foregrounds the role of literacy as a communal resource contributing to the quality of local life.

In finding a way to write this book, we have paid a great deal of attention to what kind of book it is and how to make it accessible to readers with different purposes. There are many ways of 'telling the tale', and it has taken some time to create and tell a story in a way which relates to our three aims. Much of the book is concerned with describing the details of people's lives and situating reading and writing within their worlds. We are aware that our story contains many voices, especially those of the people we interviewed, and we have been conscious throughout that the voices of other people are always mediated by us. We have tried in various ways to bring this to the attention of the reader through the ways in which we have presented the material, and by commenting as honestly as we can on how we have selected and transformed the data in the process of researching and writing. Our concern about whose version of literacy is getting represented in this book is central to our aim of challenging discourses of literacy that are dominant and simplifying.

To complement these voices we should provide some details of ourselves, making it clear in what ways the lives we describe overlap with our own experiences and orientations to literacy. We are not from Lancaster, nor even from the north of England. We moved to Lancaster sixteen years ago

to jobs at the university, having been brought up in the south and the west of England, and having worked in the United States. David has a background in Linguistics, and has been a volunteer tutor at the adult college and elsewhere. Mary was trained as a social psychologist and now works in a department of educational research, where she carries out research in adult learning. She has also worked as a part-time teacher and volunteer in adult literacy and numeracy. We came to the research with the advantages and disadvantages of being to some extent *outsiders* to the community we have been studying, in terms of both our geographical origins and our educational background. To the people in the study we are identifiable as middle-class academics and teachers.

At the same time, we live in one of the neighbourhoods of Lancaster, adjacent to the one we have studied, and it is not unfamiliar to us. We are both part of the first generation in our own families to study in higher education. We participate in local activities, and our son was born and has been brought up in Lancaster. We have shared in momentous events such as the central market burning down in 1986 and in long-running arguments about traffic problems and pollution, changes in taxation and the reorganisation of public services. In these ways we have the knowledge and difficulties of being *insiders* to the research we have been doing. The research has grown into our lives and affected our perceptions of literacy in permanent ways, plaguing our friends, neighbours and colleagues, who are all now adept at pointing out interesting literacy events to us.

Our first debt is to the people we interviewed, who freely and generously gave us their time, whether for ten minutes on the doorstep, for an hour in their offices or for many hours over several months in their homes. The interviews are the backbone of the study, and we are grateful to Sarah Padmore, who worked on the project from 1988 until 1992, carrying out much of the interviewing and participating fully in the project. Like us, Sarah is not from Lancaster. Before joining the project she worked for several years as a tutor at the Adult College, Lancaster; she has been an organiser of the Lancaster Literature Festival and now works with teenagers on creative writing.

Many other people have contributed to this study. We are grateful to Carol Squire who transcribed and word processed many hours of interviews, and to Gill Plant, Fiona Ormerod and Kathy Pitt who helped with the analysis of parts of the data. During the research an informal Steering Group met several times and provided support and ideas; we are grateful to Nigel Hall, Roz Ivanic, Meriel Lobley, Wendy Moss, Sue Nieduszynska and Brian Street for their help. Other members of the Literacy Research Group at Lancaster have also contributed, including Marilyn Martin-Jones, Rachel Rimmershaw, Simon Pardoe, Karin Tusting and Anita Wilson. We are grateful to David Bloome, Fiona Frank, Peter Hannon, Gaye Houghton, Roz

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We are grateful to Manchester University Press for permission to reprint extracts from the autobiography of William Stout, and to Lancaster Leisure for the map in Figure 3.1. The photographs in Figures 3.2, 7.1 and 7.2 are courtesy of Lancaster and Morecambe Newspapers Ltd. The photographs in Figures 3.3 and 3.8 are by Phil Keen. All other photographs are by members of the Literacy Research Group at Lancaster University.

Introduction

LOCAL LITERACIES IN A GLOBAL WORLD

Literacy studies

More than 15 years have passed since we collected the data on which *Local Literacies* is based. In this chapter we look back at the state of literacy studies at that time, how theory and research methods have evolved since then, and what contribution an approach to literacy as part of social practice has made to understanding the role of reading and writing in contemporary society. We discuss how the very meanings of literacy and learning are changing in the context of global activities and population movements, and the growing significance of digital literacies in everyday life.

Local Literacies was based on a three-year ethnographic study of individuals living in one neighbourhood of the town in the north-west of England in which we lived, and still live. It provides a situated account of the uses and meanings of reading and writing in this particular community. It links data and theory and develops new theoretical concepts which enable us to extrapolate beyond the specific context to the wider world of literacy practices. Chapter 1 offers a framework in the form of six propositions. These put forward the idea that literacies are part of social practices which are observable in literacy events and are patterned by social institutions and power relationships. This approach looks beyond texts themselves to what people do with literacy, with whom, where and how. It views literacies as purposefully embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices. They are also embedded in the wider routines, choices and preferences associated with communication practices, and different media are used alongside one another. Literacy is historically situated – practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. The varying characteristics of literacy practices in different domains of social life can be mapped according to different aspects or elements which help to distinguish between what we have called 'vernacular' and 'institutional' literacies.

The aim of writing *Local Literacies* was to produce an account which would be of value to others in at least three ways: they could draw upon

the data, the theory underlying the study and the methodology employed. The data is first presented in Chapters 5 to 8 in the form of individual profiles of four very different people. These are followed by a series of thematic chapters drawing on a wider range of research data. We made the qualitative methodology explicit in Chapter 4 as a set of steps for collecting and analysing through to writing. Such explicitness was relatively rare at the time but we wanted to provide a practical methodology which could be drawn upon and developed by other researchers, and at the same time could be used by students doing projects.

We felt there was great value in a study that started from the everyday and then moved to education, rather than approaching the everyday with questions framed solely by educational needs. Indeed this has proved to be the case, with studies adapting this approach in every level of schooling, in adult and higher education. When they first encounter this approach, however, educators and educational policy makers sometimes find it frustrating that researchers studying everyday life do not immediately provide 'solutions' for educational problems. However, a sequence of steps are needed to make this link. First there is a need to understand what people actually do and the sense they make of their actions – that is, their practices. Then it is essential to see how people learn in specific contexts. Only at this point can we turn to questions of how to teach, or how to support learning. These are the steps followed in our later study of adult literacy students, for instance (Barton *et al.* 2007). Initially, we aimed to understand the everyday lives of adult learners, then we turned to how they learned to participate in literacy practices, both in everyday settings and in formal educational settings, and only then did we work with teachers to see how to support the students in their learning.

In reflecting upon *Local Literacies* we will focus on ideas which have been developing since this study took place. These will include how theory and methodology have moved on and how the context and meanings of literacy have changed with the advent of digital media. These changes highlight the need for a stronger focus on the embedded nature of print literacy alongside other media, and on how literacy is distributed across time and place, and a more careful focus on the complexity of the social and power relationships of literacy use and learning.

Across the world people have been carrying out research utilising the theories and methodologies of Literacy Studies. Complementary frameworks have been added, including discourse analysis, textual analysis, narrative analysis and aspects of social theory. A broad spectrum of studies across different domains of activity now exists and it is possible to draw out common themes from this body of research. (For an earlier overview of such studies, see Barton 2001; for a broadening of directions, see Baynham and Prinsloo 2009; and for key readings, see Street and Lefstein 2007.) Research has taken place in contexts including all areas of

education, specific workplaces and communities. Studies focus on childhood, teenagers, gender, multilingualism, new technologies and other issues. A collection which covers many levels including primary, secondary, higher and adult education is Street (2005). Many studies focus on the links between home, communities and schools, and ones which explore this relation between everyday practices and educational practices include Hull and Schultz (2002), Mahiri (2004), Anderson *et al.* (2005), Pahl and Rowsell (2006) and Purcell-Gates (2007).

Our own work has developed in several ways. Following on from the Local Literacies study, further examples of local and community literacy research can be found in the later edited volume *Situated Literacies* (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič 2000), which brought together studies of reading and writing in a variety of local contexts, informed by the same theoretical perspective and which has been referred to as 'the Lancaster approach' (Gee 2000: 193–4; Ahearn 2012). The studies in this collection show how qualitative methods and detailed local studies can deepen a theoretical understanding of literacy by identifying distinct practices in different domains of life. For instance, a study of the literacy practices of young people in prisons by Anita Wilson demonstrated how people used literacy to construct a 'third space' between prison and outside. This resistant use of literacy contrasts with Kathryn Jones' work with bilingual Welsh farmers at an auction market, showing how the individual farmers are incorporated into the agricultural bureaucratic system framed by the European Union through a complex process of locally situated talk around texts and the interweaving of spoken Welsh with written English. A study by Karin Tusting on the role of literacy practices within a Catholic congregation shows how literacy is used globally to co-ordinate and synchronise time. Such investigations demonstrate how broader social theory can be combined with a Literacy Studies approach to make links between local and global phenomena.

Literacy Studies offers a set of concepts which are useful in understanding the significance of other people and organisations in literacy practices. In addition to the networks and brokers of *Local Literacies*, Brandt has drawn attention to the concept of 'sponsors of literacy' – 'those agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract who enable or induce literacy and gain advantage by it in some way' (Brandt and Clinton 2002: 349). It is useful to look at this historically, seeing how the church, for example, has acted as a supporter of literacy practices over the years, or how in contemporary life, business, publishers or governments support particular practices and marginalise others. These sponsors support specific views and advocate for them. Brandt's approach is important in understanding ways in which families, households, neighbourhoods and communities as well as workplaces and more formal institutions may support forms of literacy. This helps unpack the complexities of the influences on people's

literacy and also the role of teachers in educational situations (Brandt 1998: 183). More recent directions include exploring the complexity of the groups and networks which people's practices are located within, such as communities of practice and affinity groups (Barton and Tusting 2005; Barton 2011). This is all leading to new understandings of the role of people and institutions in reading and writing.

Living in the linguistic landscape

When we carried out the original study we brought to it an interest in what we referred to as the visual literacy environment. This goes back to earlier work (Barton *et al.* 1993) where we explored the value of images as data in literacy research. We were therefore conscious of language in the public spaces in Lancaster and the potential importance of written language here. We documented street signs, traffic signs, graffiti, moving billboards and placards carried on a demonstration. We noted how closely controlled the public visual environment of the town was, and how there were strict norms (sometimes deliberately flouted) about what commercial enterprises and individual citizens were allowed to display. Most signs were official ones directing traffic or labelling roads and buildings. This linguistic landscape has changed a great deal over time and provides traces of literacy practices and the social practices within which they are embedded. Lancaster has increasingly become a branded tourist city with more signage aimed at visitors, along with free leaflets and tourist activities such as walking tours. Changes in shop fronts, businesses and public buildings bear the traces of social and economic change, migration, and changing communication practices more generally, as can be seen in the Aside 0.1 about a neighbourhood store.

The city also became a government supported 'demonstration city' for cycling, with an associated increase in signage indicating cycle ways. There are still battles over public spaces as local authorities try to restrict signs put up by individuals advertising garage sales or lost dogs. This informal signage is sometimes still handwritten, like the banner on the roundabout in Figure 3.2 that we captured in the early 1990s, but now it is more likely to be computer generated. Liberalisation of alcohol licensing laws has led to changing practices and new signs limit drinking in the streets beyond the boundary of the city centre. Meanwhile there are continuities with the 1990s, such as the man holding a billboard proclaiming the end of the world (Figure 3.5) who still walks the streets, twenty years older.

Since we began to explore the visual landscape of Lancaster, there have been major developments in understanding language in public spaces, under the rubric of linguistics landscapes research (such as Shohamy and

Gorter 2009). Initially focusing on multilingualism, the research has broadened (as in Papen 2012); Scollon and Scollon (2003) have analysed it as 'discourses in place' and others, such as Denis and Pontille (2010), have documented the practices behind the signage.

Aside 0.1 The corner shop

One local corner shop, illustrated in Figure 0.1, has gone through a number of reincarnations since the 1990s. It has been variously a general grocery shop, a plumbing materials store and an Asian delicatessen. It advertises itself currently as LUCKEYSZŁ English, Polish & Asian Food Store. The shop logo is partly written in letters from the Polish alphabet. 'Polish shop' is written in English with a translation next to it reading 'Polski sklep'. The shop has developed to cater for Eastern European migrant workers who came to the area with the free movement of labour from 2004 onwards within the expanded European Union. They work mainly in the care sector and in food processing industries in the area.

Other signs and artefacts on the shop wall point to the practices of this migrant group and beyond to the global complexity of the media industries that service them. The satellite dish advertises Cyfra+, a Polish digital satellite platform, owned and operated by a French media company Canal+. By 2010, Cyfra+ offered 95 Polish-language channels and had 1.6 million subscribers (www.cyfraplus.pl/). The Payzone logo on the corner of the shop is a method of 'smart card' payment useful for people who have no UK bank account and want to move money across national boundaries – it advertises itself as 'Secure online shopping, sharing money with family abroad and the perfect travel cash card'. This business is partly financed by mobile phone companies.

The Asian connection seems to be reduced to a more virtual and commercial one. The shop is run by an Asian shopkeeper, but it does not stock Asian foods as it once did. The website address advertised on the front of the shop doesn't work but it signals that LUCKEYSZŁ is a brand with links beyond the physical location of the neighbourhood corner shop in a global and digital age.

There are still more indicators of everyday life changes in this simple, and at first glance unpromising, photograph. The date engraved in stone over the door signals that this building has a history stretching back over 100 years. There is a CCTV camera of the kind that has become ubiquitous in public places, making the UK currently one of the most surveilled societies in the world (see Cole 2004).

Figure 0.1 The corner shop

The changing profile of Lancaster

Chapter 3 provides a social profile of Lancaster in the mid-1990s. There is much continuity with that profile, with the same struggles to keep city centre shops open and to maintain employment in the area. More houses have been built on the edge of the city and some blocks of flats in the centre of the city. Lancaster University has expanded and what was the teacher training college is now part of the University of Cumbria, so there are two universities in the city. More shops in the city centre have closed but, on the other hand, the open market in Market Square has been reinvigorated, partly as a farmers' market. The same spaces are used for public demonstrations, but there is less grassroots political activity around nuclear disarmament visible in the city centre and more around environmental issues.

What we refer to as the institutions of literacy continue to be important in the city but many are struggling. Reduced funding from central and local government is putting pressures on public services and there are no longer regeneration funds for the neighbourhood we studied. These cuts increase the likelihood of local unemployment since the public sector is the largest employer in the area. Some local post offices have been closed and some local libraries are under threat of closure. Pressure also comes from changing commercial practices and digital technologies, so there are

still several bookshops but business is difficult for those selling new books, whilst second-hand outlets are thriving. Sales of local newspapers are declining and there are fewer free newspapers delivered to people's homes. The rise in internet sites for booking holidays has led to fewer travel agents in the town centre. On the surface, the neighbourhood we studied in depth has not changed much since the original study. However, there are more students living in the area, either renting or buying the small two-up-two-down houses. As noted earlier, patterns of migration have changed with the free movement of labour within the European Union. As a result more Polish and other eastern European people are living in the neighbourhood, boosting the Polish-speaking community and its local church. Aside 3.1, describing a house for sale in the neighbourhood in the mid-1990s, seems strikingly out-of-date in one respect, as house prices have tripled since then. This has made the houses less possible as 'starter' homes for young families wanting to buy their first house.

Vernacular practices in the virtual city

However, the biggest and most striking change in the city is not to be seen by walking the streets and documenting the physical environment. It exists in the fast broadband coverage, complete mobile phone coverage and the amount of personal technology which people have access to. In the original study we came across two computers in the neighbourhood, one in the local community centre and the other in the house of a man who saw himself as a writer. Both were used by local people wanting to make simple adverts and print them off. There was no world wide web and no Google. Computers and computing were largely restricted to workplaces, as older adults recall (Hamilton, 2011b). Laptops were heavy and expensive. Mobile phones were just beginning to become fashionable and text messaging was just taking off in the late 1990s.

Now, most people in Lancaster and across the UK have the internet at home and most people have a mobile phone with them throughout the day (OFCOM 2011). Furthermore, all the main institutions affecting the city have an internet presence. People's vernacular practices around literacy have changed profoundly in a relatively short space of time. To get a gauge of this, Aside 12.1 provided an A–Z sample of local groups which existed in the mid-1990s, from the Archaeological Society to the Zen Meditation group. Nearly all of these groups still exist, and they now have an online presence. Some groups have locally created sites, like the Lancaster Beekeepers which lists events, has items for sale, imparts advice, and documents the history of the association. Others are local versions of national sites, such as the local history site and the space to report UFO sightings. They also link to other spaces, so the Virtual Lancaster site, for instance, has a twitter feed as well as links to blogs and Facebook.

A sense of Lancaster as a place is created through the way it is presented on official news sites of the council, the police, the fire and rescue services, newspapers and the educational establishments, which are all online. In addition there are blogs about Lancaster life. As well as individuals' diary-like blogs, there are green blogs and conservative blogs, clubs have blogs, and even the bishop has a blog. There seem to be virtual tours available of every public landmark in the city from the canal and the castle to the cathedral and you can walk the streets of anywhere in the city virtually with Google Street View. People book restaurants, check movie times and find out about council services on line. In these ways online activity is integrated into the everyday practices of people and organisations.

People's practices bring together the virtual and the material. As an example of this, book buying can be done in a physical bookshop or it can be done online, and the book can be a physical object or a digital version. As noted already, bookshops selling new books are declining. However, they are just part of the picture and the situation with overall book sales is more complicated in a place like Lancaster. There are second-hand bookshops and extensive buying of new and second-hand books online, along with novel ways of book exchange like book crossing (www.bookcrossing.com). There is a complex pattern of circulation and recirculation of texts. To gauge the extent of book reading, the use of electronic readers such as Kindles and iPads needs to be put alongside the reading of physical books.

It is worth returning to the social practices documented in the original study to see how these have been changed as a result of new technologies. These include the many ways in which people draw on social networks to help them with particular literacy requirements, outlined earlier. Literacy was seen as a communal, collective resource rather than simply an attribute of individual people, a resource that underpins political participation at the local level, and also offers ways into more formal political organisations. We found that literacy was used by people to make sense of events in their lives and to resolve a variety of problems, such as those related to health, to their jobs, to their children's schooling and to encounters with the law. Often this involved confrontation with professional experts and specialised systems of knowledge, and people often drew on their networks for support and knowledge, thereby becoming expert in a particular domain and becoming a resource for other community members themselves. Literacy was also used for personal change and transformation, both within and outside education-related domains, for accessing information relating to people's interests, for asserting or creating personal identity, and for self-directed learning.

In the six areas of vernacular activity identified in Chapter 14, people's practices have changed significantly as a result of new technologies in a relatively short period of time. All activities are affected; it is not just a

question of going online. These changes were beginning to happen in the mid-1990s. People now extensively organise their lives with appointment diaries and address books which are on computers or mobile phones. Arrangements to meet and the micro-coordination of social interaction are mediated by technologies. Increasingly, relations with institutions like banks and tax offices are done online, and customers are required in many cases to move away from their previous print-based practices. The local council utilises digital technology as well as print and face to face contact to represent itself and to communicate with citizens about diverse issues such as school entry, recycling and adverse weather. Government policy itself may make new textual demands on people and assume access to up-to-date communication technologies. These findings fit in well with other research which examines how technologies are deployed as people pursue their everyday concerns and interests and how this changes the nature of their literacy practices (as in Wellman and Haythornthwaite 2002; Leander 2009). Today, while people still reside in physical places, and government institutions still impact on them in those places, people increasingly interact with their virtual or digital city (Tanabe *et al.* 2002; Wessels 2010).

Personal communication has been revolutionised by smart phones and social networking sites. As an example, the holiday postcard now exists alongside the holiday text message or the shared Facebook photographs. Postcards and an extensive variety of greetings cards still exist physically but their meaning and significance are being renegotiated within the greater range of alternative possibilities. What was referred to as private leisure in the original study is increasingly done online and, as the boundaries between private and public are renegotiated, much activity is more social and public. In addition, although the online world is strikingly multimodal, it is nevertheless extensively mediated by literacy. Contemporary life is documented by the footprints left online through social participation on Facebook and elsewhere. Activities like documenting family and local history are supported by easily available online resources. And the internet is a crucial part of researching health issues, problems with children's development or legal grievances.

Of course, there are issues of access and exclusion, as explored in relation to older adults in the Lancaster area by Hamilton (2011a) and nationally by Williams (2011). Younger people are being brought up in this world, while older people are having to change many long-established practices. Access to technology costs money and people's participation is often shaped by considerations of cost. As with local expertise around print literacies, people vary a great deal in their individual ways of participation in practices and there are people who support each other within families, households and neighbourhoods. Warschauer (2004) provides a more nuanced understanding of access which resonates with literacy

studies, that access is not just the physical availability of technology, but also involves participation in the socially situated practices.

Local, global and glocal

Contemporary social change is not just associated with the use of new technologies. As pointed out in Chapter 14, governmental and commercial pressures are leading to greater regulation and surveillance of social practices. Such changes impact on literacy practices. Technological change and new media are part of a set of interconnected factors which are transforming many aspects of contemporary life. As others such as Lankshear and Knobel (2011) and Kress (2003) have pointed out, changes in the substance and character of literacies are also associated with changes in institutions, the economy, and general processes of globalisation. We would emphasise changes in relations of social power, in the direction of abolishing existing settled hierarchies and remaking new ones, and changes in economic structure, with writing taking on different roles in an economy in which information is increasingly important. It is the *combination* of these different changes which is altering our communicative landscape. At the micro-level of specific social contexts these macro-changes result in shifts in the configuration of dominant and vernacular literacy practices, that is what kinds of writing are powerful and influential and who is able to deploy such influential literacies. Brandt (1998) calls these 'economies of literacy'.

Since our original study, there has been a significant shift in the understanding of relations between global and local activity. Globalisation has become a key concept for exploring how broader issues such as travel and migration, changing patterns of employment, and global consumption impact on people's everyday lives. In all these activities, reading and writing are central to how people make links between the local and the global in a two-way process of 'glocalisation' (see Wellman 2002: 3; Urry 2003: 84). This has led to a focus on better understandings of 'translocal literacies', that is, tracing patterns of literacy across contexts in order to understand the dynamics of local-global relationships.

Key to such an understanding is the distinction between vernacular and institutional practices which we utilise in *Local Literacies*. Vernacular literacies are contrasted with the official literacies sponsored by institutions. Because they are shaped by social institutions and power relationships, some literacies are therefore more dominant, visible and influential than others. Starting from particular domains is a useful way to explore how different domains interact and overlap and the high degree of hybridity and fusion. The borders, the transitions and the spaces between domains are then very salient: they are significant, for instance, in understanding children starting out at school, students moving from school to college, or

how education might support – and challenge – workplace practices (see Ivanič *et al.* 2009).

In the light of new discussions and understandings of the dynamics of glocalisation, we are aware of the need for a more subtle discussion of this idea of vernacular which acknowledges the many ways in which vernaculars draw on, and contribute to, institutional discourses, recombining and recontextualising them in everyday encounters. In *Local Literacies* and *Situated Literacies* we began to talk about the interfaces with institutional literacies but there is more to be explored about the different kinds of interface and the interpenetration of vernacular, institutional and systemic practices. These explorations are important for understanding how public participation and collective action can be supported and how literacy practices might act as a barrier to such action.

New frameworks for enquiry: developments in theory and methodology

The original theory and methodology we used in *Local Literacies* identifies particular units of analysis. The concept of the literacy event provides a starting-point for analysing interactions, whilst the concept of literacy practice provides a way of relating these to broader cultural and structural formations. Concentrating on specific domains of life, the detailed, multi-method, collaborative and responsive methodologies provide models for carrying out research. Juxtaposed with discourse analysis, these are powerful ways of researching and analysing texts and practices. Further work identified key dimensions of literacy practices (Barton and Hall 2000; Hamilton 2000). One more recent version of the dimensions of practices would involve: physical settings and activities; resources and artefacts; roles played by other people and their institutional links, such as social networks, networks of support, mediators and sponsors; and identities, values, feelings and motivations as explored in Ivanič *et al.* (2009).

The need to explore the relations between global and local practices has brought other conceptual developments to literacy studies, including new connections with other social theoretical approaches. These expand the reach of literacy research both theoretically and methodologically. The feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith (2005) has drawn attention to the crucial power of texts in coordinating and aligning social action, and the institutional ethnography framework she has developed offers new tools for researching the organisation of local practices. Literacy, like other semiotic modes of representation, is a powerful tool for organising social life and therefore is integral to power. It is pivotal, as Smith says, to 'ruling relations' – to normalising social orders and our ideas of people as citizens within them. Similarly Actor Network Theory (ANT) points out the coordinating power of texts as they travel between locations, people and

social domains. ANT asserts that texts can take on agency in that they frequently act on behalf of people, and in place of people (see Latour 2005; Hamilton 2011).

Theory and methodology are inextricably linked. Our strategy of focusing in-depth on literacy practices in one locality fits in well with broader developments of methodology in the social sciences, such as the arguments of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995; Coleman and von Hellermann 2009). These approaches see a locality as a starting place from which connections will be traced outward, rather than as a single isolated point, as in Scollon's notion of a 'nexus of practices' (2001). This leads to a strategy of following the trajectories of texts – figuring out where they have come from, how they circulate and where they are headed. Studying a nexus of practice also aligns with the methodologies suggested by recent approaches to Linguistic Ethnography developed in the UK (as in Rampton, Maybin and Tusting 2007; Blommaert 2010) and literacy is centrally located in comparable Linguistic Anthropological approaches in the United States (Ahearn 2012). Further methodological issues include the increasing importance of multimodal analysis aided by social semiotic theory (as in Kress 2010) and the need for distinctive online methodologies to deal with the increasing presence of digital literacies in people's lives (as in Hine 2005). The result of this attention to methodology is a convergence of critical approaches in anthropology, cultural psychology, social semiotics, sociology, and science and technology studies which all recognise the significance of texts and the practices around texts.

Literacies for learning

Studies of the literacy practices of everyday life can provide data, methods and theories for educational practice. They provide data about how and what people read and write in their everyday lives which can inform the educational curriculum (Barton *et al.* 2007). In terms of methods, such studies provide ways of getting students to investigate and reflect upon their own practices as a way of engaging them in their work, for example in the uses of photography or keeping literacy diaries (see Barton 2001 and Ivanič *et al.* 2009). The theory of literacy as social practice offers educational practitioners a language to talk in when discussing literacy issues which is flexible enough to take account of the new contexts within with educators now work. Digital technologies, distance learning and new educational markets are changing the boundaries of education and the ways and time frames within which students access learning opportunities. Patterns of communication between teachers and students are changing as the possibilities of virtual interaction are explored. Traditional sources of expert knowledge and authority are challenged by

Web 2.0 technologies that allow students to participate actively in the creation and publishing of new kinds of collaborative texts.

Literacy Studies research in the specific domain of education has also provided significant insights. The research projects reported in Ivanič *et al.* (2009) identify different literacies being drawn upon in vocational classes in England, Wales and Scotland. Students are learning the reading and writing demands of the vocations they are training for, such as catering or construction or hairdressing; these are the literacies of particular workplaces. Cutting across these, there are particular ways of reading and writing which help students in their learning – the literacies for learning. These literacies for work and literacies for learning also exist alongside other distinct forms of reading and writing associated with assessment and, increasingly, with accountability, through the record-keeping they have to do. This work demonstrates the different literacies which students have to grapple with simultaneously – a phenomenon which is significant in other domains.

Distinct literacies are all being enacted at the same time (Ivanič *et al.* 2009). This becomes complex and we see tensions where the same text is serving different purposes, such as the individual learning plans which are common in English education; here several potentially conflicting purposes are invested in one text (as in Hamilton 2009; Burgess 2008). We have also seen how students in college come across writing demands which are unlike writing practices they have participated in elsewhere and certainly unlike their everyday writing practices. When examining the dynamics of literacies in a particular context, identifying different sponsors and their aims enables us to see the pressures which support and hinder different practices. Part of this is tracking where a text has come from and where it is heading.

In conclusion

The approach to literacy as social practice exemplified in *Local Literacies* is important because it imagines literacy differently and can disrupt dominant narratives to take account of everyday practices (Hamilton 2012). Literacy as social practice sees literacy as:

- a process rather than a thing to be possessed and exchanged
- part of social practice, embedded in collective action and the creation of everyday worlds
- an identity resource, the making of meanings and persons
- constantly re-invented in different material forms, from carving on stone, to printed on paper to digital screens.

It emphasises diversity of literacy practices rather than universal attributes.

This diversity can be discovered in contemporary societies and also traced across the historical landscapes of written communication.

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Part I