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The growth of literacy in historic perspective: clarifying the role of formal schooling and adult learning opportunities

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The growth of literacy in historic perspective: Clarifying the role of formal schooling and adult learning opportunities

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***Abstract:** Why should one study the history of literacy and the separate histories of schooling/development for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006? Social and education historians from all continents have been describing and mapping the growth of formal schooling in their countries and the separate histories of the growth of literacy. Such studies began to appear more than forty years ago, but decision-makers have yet to take account of the lessons to be learned. In particular, international intellectual cooperation and aid agencies tend to associate certain forms of education and adult literacy provision with theories of modernization, economic growth or models of development in a frequently mechanistic, linear or simply rights-based fashion. At the same time, different schools of historiography provide alternative readings of the actual complex linkages between literacy, education and social/economic changes.*

Social historians such as François Furet and Mona Ozouf, Harvey Graff, or historians of education such as Brian Simons or economists of education like Lê Thành Khôi show that the history of literacy development is complex. They have shown that the history of literacy acquisition does not coincide with the history of formal schooling, and that one cannot be used interchangeably to describe the other. They also show that literacy was highly restricted in earliest times and not necessarily highly-respected. Later notions of power, status and knowledge associated with reading and writing ability were largely absent. The complex interaction of some form of literacy and oral transmission has meant that the relation with the written word has changed and evolved over time. Reading was for centuries around the world an oral and often collective activity rather than a silent one (Graff, Johansson). Also, across Europe and North America, a gender 'division of labour' with respect to reading/writing/numeracy has been uncovered by social historians (Furet and Ozouf, Johansson, Mackinnon). Certainly, the spread of Confucianism in Asia, especially China, then wherever Chinese expansion led (as in Viet Nam) lent itself to a highly organized and collective role for the literate. (Lê Thành Khôi, Limage)

This paper links social history and literacy development and formal education. Arguably, schools in all regions of the world have never had as their fundamental mission the transmission of literacy and numeracy skills. The expansion of schooling in the late 19th century and then dramatically post World War II responded to more complex considerations. Since then, schools have had a social cohesion or national construction function that frames the curriculum and how it is transmitted, including the form of reading and possibly writing or numeracy skills. European models of education, missionary and religion-based instruction were transposed to colonial Latin America, Africa, Asia and to the Middle East. Religion-based instruction was, for the most part, highly formalized, frequently by rote memorization (not necessarily with understanding) and often in another language limiting access to reading in national languages or development of writing and numeracy skills for all but a carefully selected elite. (An historic example of a breakthrough in this approach is of course the invention of the printing press and the rise of Protestantism in Europe). In the highly diverse Islamic world, models of transmission of knowledge, in particular, in the Middle East, did not begin to show the same patterns as Europe until the late 19th century. In the case of the Western world, mass schooling contributed to literacy and numeracy only when the surrounding population already possessed a certain level of these skills. It is also arguable that industrialization enhanced the climate for widespread literacy acquisition or whether in fact, its growth in the 19th century actually limited need for more literate and informed working populations. A number of historians of education will argue worldwide that by the very repetitive and manually intensive nature of early industrialization, literacy was neither needed nor considered desirable except in extremely limited ways. (These arguments in historic context re-appear in the second half of the 20th century with the debates about economic growth or development models and models of literacy provision, especially around the

EWLP 'functional' approach or currently, work-place literacy. They also re-appear contentiously in certain conceptions of lifelong learning, which may lend themselves to various justifications of globalization and delocalization). Also, while some historiography traces a demand for some form of education or literacy as a 'right' back to classical philosophers, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights only addressed this issue formally worldwide following World War II. This dimension of another role for formal education and adult learning opportunities is, therefore, relatively recent.

I. Studies in the history of literacy: what do they contribute?

Since the beginning of the 1970s, historians have become increasingly inter-disciplinary, perhaps more than any of the other social sciences. This has been extremely beneficial for the study of the history of literacy. Harvey J. Graff's comprehensive analyses of the growth and transformations of this field by historians is the major source for this section of the paper. It can be argued that the interdisciplinarity and intra-disciplinarity achieved by historians of literacy could and should lead to much more systematic cooperation with education policy and practice, especially in international agencies where the lessons of previous experience and institutional memory are frequently absent and aid is allocated, frequently on the basis of short-term or 'best-practice' interventions that are not grounded in context or actual evidence-based results.

A. Generations of literacy studies

The first generation of historical studies of literacy began in the 1960s with studies by Stone (1969), Cipolla (1969) and Schofield (1968) who made the first strong case for the historical study of literacy and major chronological trends, possible sources for further investigation (not necessarily quantitative) and advancing the case for forms of 'direct', systematic, and perhaps, later on, comparable data. It was hoped that this approach would lead to a better understanding of the dynamics, impact and consequences of some forms of literacy acquisition.

A second generation was inspired by this pioneering research. It included much larger studies such as those of Schofield (1973), Egil Johansson (1977, 1981), Lockridge (1974), Furet and Ozouf (1977), Houston (1985) and of course, Harvey Graff (1979, 1981). There was the beginning of a large body of local, national, or regional studies, dissertations, and monographs in many cases, largely unpublished in Europe. These studies often relied heavily, if not primarily, on quantitative records, especially census or signatory sources (See **Table 1** at the end of this paper). They developed interpretations based on close examination of the local context, including historically grounded interpretations of changing patterns, distributions and differentiations in literacy levels, and connections between literacy and social and economic development. They began the systematic examination of institutional and state activities (like the introduction of schooling or political transformation, or the French Revolution). This period of historical studies was often undertaken by the social scientists whose analytical frameworks for the study of history were explicit: social class formation and patterns of reading/writing or psychological and attitudinal (with a more individualistic westernized model). Examples

of the former include Eric Hobsbawm or E.P. Thompson and historians of education, such as Brian Simon. Examples of the latter might have been inspired by Jack Goody or even Marshall McLuhan. Regardless of ideological framework, the study of the history of literacy enabled researchers to discover contradictions and discontinuities in the growth and spread of reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

Table 1 Place here or end of paper

This generation of research established literacy as a field of investigation for a wider range of historians and social scientists in other fields with strong sensitivity to 'historicity' (comparative educationists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, and to a more limited extent, psychologists and anthropologists). Literacy became increasingly an independent variable in studies of economic change, demographic behaviour, cultural development and conflict, class formation and stratification, collective action of all kinds, family formation and structures, etc. About the same time, another group of historians started to focus on cultural, printing and publishing. Literacy was almost a given in the first such research but later, became a factor to be studied in looking at the spread of text and the availability of printed material. This field included studies of the press, newspapers, the history of 'books', popular culture, etc.

All of this work, according to Graff (and others), has been strongly affected, whether as a reaction against or for some form of *modernization* theory. The proponents of various modernization theories often see literacy's power and potential uncritically or assume some form of linear progress enabled by its acquisition in either a restricted or more critical manner. Graff argues that this body of research, and the policy uses to which it has been made, will not necessarily stand up to robust examination, especially given the state of available quantitative or even qualitative records. He further argues that conceptual difficulties such as 'obstructive dichotomies' further limit the usefulness: 'literate versus illiterate, print versus oral, quantity versus quality, cognitive versus non-cognitive impacts, none of which are interpretively rich or complex enough to advance our understanding'. (Graff, 2003, page 17.)

He, however, identifies major **themes** and **lessons** from the historiography of literacy based on his own and others work over the past thirty years. They are presented in bold below (derived from Harvey J. Graff, "Introduction to Historical Studies of Literacy" in Interchange, Vol. 34, 2/3, 2003, pages 123-131 summarized from Harvey J. Graff, "Assessing the History of Literacy in the 1990s: Themes and Questions").

Lesson 1: The historicity of literacy constitutes a 1st theme from which many other key imperatives and implications follow. Reading and writing take on their meaning and acquire their value only in concrete historical circumstances that mediate in specific terms whatever general or supposedly 'universal' attributes or concomitants may be claimed for literacy.

Whatever the analytical ‘battlefield’ about the role of literacy (and education in general), the first lesson is that literacy only takes on meaning in a specific context and usage. (This is not to be confused with the consequences or power of literacy). This is true for ancient times as well as the present. (See **Table 2** at end of paper). Literacy’s uses for the past 2500 years are context-bound. Historians are joined increasingly by anthropologists, psychologists and some political economists and political scientists in this fundamental recognition. An historical approach to literacy changes conceptualization, assumptions, and expectations with respect to reading, writing and numeracy. Further, this applies to contemporary conceptions, policies and practices with respect to literacy and all forms and levels of schooling. *They are historically grounded too and highly resistant to change.* Graff argues: ‘Ignorance of the circumstances in which crucial concepts, arrangements, and expectations were fashioned, the means by which they have been maintained and their consequences together limit severely if not contradict directly contemporary analysis, diagnosis, prescription. (Use of the medical metaphor is itself part of this history)’. (Graff, 2003, page 19)

Place Table 2 here or end of paper

Lesson 2: That subjects such as literacy, learning, and schooling, and the uses of reading and writing are simple, unproblematic notions is a historical myth. Experience, historical and more recent, underscores their fundamental complexity – practically and theoretically, their enormously complicated conceptual and highly problematic nature.

Historians conclusively undercover a *myth*: that literacy, learning and schooling and the uses of reading and writing are simple, rather than complex and problematic. Two generations of historical studies of literacy (and even more so, of all forms of formal and informal education) demonstrate that complexity. Historical research also destroys the usefulness of ‘great debates’ about supposed dichotomies: human language acquisition and usage, literate as opposed to oral, and their consequences, the relations of literacy to hierarchies of power and wealth as opposed to egalitarian democracy, literacy’s contributions to political, economic, and social development (let alone individual or household well-being). Graff’s major contribution in The Legacies of Literacy, documents what he calls ‘continuities and contradictions’. Firstly, he identifies (a) ‘the extraordinary frailty and fragility of conceptions and conceptualizations of literacy, and (b) the contradiction of consequences expected from its acquisition’. (Graff, 2003, p.19). Here, his research and that of other historians of literacy demonstrate that there are no simplistic linear connections between rising levels or even ‘thresholds’ or large-scale impacts to be found for individuals or entire societies with a single notion of literacy acquisition. They argue that the claims made for literacy to correlate with economic growth and industrialization, wealth and productivity, political stability and participatory democracy, urbanization, consumption and even family planning, are excessive. Graff’s ‘literacy myth’ is that there is a strong, universalistic link between literate individuals and societies and societal well-being. He argues that such links are based more on faith than

evidence from history (which does not diminish literacy's context-bound importance, however) (Arnove and Graff, 1987, Baudelot and Establet, 1989, Dubet and Duru-Bellat, 2000, Kozol, 1985).

Literacy acquisition, indeed any form of education or learning, is not neutral. All learning is based on some assumptions and so are the 'tools', such as literacy. Here Graff joins many other disciplines and students of literacy (from philosophers of literacy such as Paulo Freire to the 'new literacy studies'). Here, he refers also to a misleading current debate about 'skills' versus 'content' as another example.

The complex, and largely unstudied, relationships between various media of literacy add a further dimension. The current discussion of electronic print media actually has a long uncritically examined history in terms of intricate relationships between all forms of print and visual and oral communication. The potential *practical* contributions of anthropology, ethnography and psychology to such understanding are currently unclear also.

Lesson 3: Typical conceptions of literacy share not only assumptions about their unproblematic status, but also the presumption of the central value neutrality. Historical literacy studies demonstrate that no means or modes of learning are neutral all incorporate the assumptions and expectations, biases or emphasis of production, association, prior use, transmission, maintenance, and preservation.

The history of literacy is paved with over-estimation followed by under-estimation of the potential 'power' of reading, writing and/or numeracy. Alphabetic literacy is an exceptionally important, but not the only set of competencies and abilities that interact and support learning in a larger sense of the word. School-based literacy is an even more specific form of written language usage, usually out of everyday context. School-based literacy or learning then also becomes the primary means to define equality and inequality, 'school failure', other forms of stigmatization identified around formal schooling (Baudelot and Establet, 1999, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, 1970, Dubet and Duru-Bellat, 2000, Limage, 1975, 1981, 1986, 1999). Historical studies also demonstrate that learning is more complex than it is made to appear in more optimistic or simplistic linkages made in an a-historical manner.

Lesson 4: Historical studies document the damages, human costs that follow from the domination of the practical and theoretical presumptions that elevate the literate, the written to the status of the dominant partner in what Jack Goody calls the 'Great Dichotomy' and Ruth Finnegan the 'Great Divide.'

By assuming that literacy on its own (and intellectual endeavour in general) distinguishes an individual from a previous state of alienation or ignorance, considerable institutional intervention and international organization attention to literacy has undoubtedly taken place in an unintentionally counterproductive manner. The medical and battle language used to 'eradicate illiteracy' and eliminate 'ignorance' associated with many literacy

campaigns let alone education debates in both industrialized and developing countries has stigmatized individuals who do not possess basic skills. The approach neglects and diminishes all the other forms of life experience, communication skills and knowledge of individuals who do not read and write (Arnové and Graff, 1986, Bhola, 1984, Freebody and Welch, 1993, Goody, 1999, Hunter and Harman, 1979, Kaestle, 1991, Limage, 1986, 1999)

Lesson 5: Hand in hand with simplicity and superiority have gone presumed ease of learning and expectation of individual along with societal progress. Historical studies reiterate the difficulties experienced in gaining, practicing, and mastering the elements of alphabetic literacy—seldom easy; learning literacy, and whatever lies beyond it, has always been hard work.

Lesson 6: Multiple paths of learning literacy, employment of an extraordinary range of instructors, institutions, environments, and beginning texts, and diversity of conflicting or contradictory motivations pushing and pulling contradict simple notions and images. Long transformation to 20th century notions that tie literacy acquisition to childhood.

It is not so easy to learn to read and write fluently. The complexities and difficulties are underestimated especially when tools are given more significance than the competencies through emphasis on instructional media (technology, pedagogy or institutional setting). Historical evidence probably demonstrates that *motivation* for some level or form of literacy is perhaps the single most significant factor in a learning setting, regardless of context. Also, history illustrates that there are multiple paths to learning to read and write as well as a considerable range of teachers, environments and institutional arrangements, including informal ones outside the age-grade school-based approach.

Lesson 7: Expectations and common practice of learning literacy as part of elementary education are themselves historical developments. The presumption holds that given the availability of written texts and elementary instruction, basic abilities of reading and writing are in themselves sufficient for further developing literacy and education. Failure reflects overwhelmingly on the individual.

The very notion that literacy should be acquired during a period called childhood is a historically recent invention. History demonstrates that individuals learned to read and/or write or calculate at many different stages in their lives and with relatively specific purposes in mind to do so. The twentieth century notion of a child needing to learn to read and write in the first year of primary education has greatly influenced the concept of individual success and failure. An especially vivid illustration is the French term *échec scolaire* (school failure) used to describe any young person who has not been successful in learning in the prescribed sequence and timing. The school is not to blame (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, Dubet and Duru-Bellat, 2000, Koubi and Guglielmi 2000)

Also, with respect to adult literacy learning, programmatic considerations in institutions and international organizations lend themselves to simplistic approaches. A literacy programme provides 'initial literacy'. A post-literacy programme provides another dose of reading and writing instruction. It is assumed that the first dose provided sustainable skills and that the second dose offers an opportunity to use those skills in concrete settings. Failure to maintain what is learned in the first setting is called 'relapse into illiteracy'. Considerable research and practical experience has not led international agencies or national institutions or even non-governmental organizations to seriously question the historical evidence (Limage, 1999; Bhola, 1984)

Lesson 8: Just as individuals followed different paths to literacy and learning, societies historically and more recently took different paths toward achieving rising levels of popular literacy: no one route to universal literacy and its associated 'modern' concomitants.

History prior to the 20th century illustrates the many ways people came to literacy. The notion of universal, formal, compulsory schooling for literacy transmission and social reproduction is a relatively new phenomenon. The literacy to be conveyed in public schools was considered 'safer' and more controlled than independently gained reading and writing. Carefully crafted learning environments could be reforming or socially secure. Social historians and especially political historians have documented the pre-twentieth century fears of the dangers of literacy for social unrest. But the nineteenth and twentieth century creation of carefully-crafted schools where children might recite or learn limited literacy skills for many of these historians was more a concern for social control than for reform and democratization. (Simon, 1974, Thompson 1963, Furet and Ozouf, 1977). Other historians have documented the way religion may have also greatly expanded access to 'safe' reading (if not writing) on a larger scale, the Swedish example being a case in point (Arnove and Graff, 1987, Johansson, 1987 Lindmark, 2003)

Modern school systems follow approved paths to literacy (or learning or legitimized knowledge) and have been hardened progressively since the late 19th century into expectations, policies and theories. Further, just as individuals followed different paths to literacy and learning in the past, societies also took different routes to promoting popular literacy. History demonstrates as well that there is not a single 'best' approach to linking literacy with a particular form of economic and political development (revolutionary or progressive). There is no one route to economic development, industrialization, political democracy or any aspect of 'modernization'. In some cases one preceded the other. In others economic growth seems to have had a negative impact on literacy and education (early European industrialization in particular).

"The great danger today is one that twentieth-century education on all levels shares with literacy models; the simple presumption that economic growth and development depends simply and directly on investment in and high rates of productivity from systems of formal education. Quantity and quality are confused, educational purpose is distorted. The consequent fears of 'crisis' and 'decline' rigidly narrow the frame of education including literacy" and all but guarantee disappointment and repetition of the cycle." (Graff,

2003, page 26). The term ‘crisis’ re-appears regularly with respect to more and more social problems. It was introduced in contemporary international educational debates, primarily in the 1980s with Philip H. Coombs, The World Crisis in Education. The View from the Eighties.

B. New directions for the history of literacy: an overview

Historians of literacy are now at a ‘third’ generation according to Graff. This phase is and will be interdisciplinary. One direction is being taken by experimental, ethnographic and comparative cognitive psychologists, inspired by the ground-breaking work of Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (The Psychology of Literacy, 1981 for example) and community-based ethnographies of literacy such as the work of Shirley Heath in Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms (1983) A rich and growing literature over the ten years also described as the “new literacy studies” by primarily British and North American scholars, although working often in Latin America or Africa, (including David Barton and Mary Hamilton, Brian Street and others), are leading this examination of ‘multiple literacies’ and literacy events, local literacies, etc.

Historians of literacy, having established the usefulness of quantitative data and its limitations as well as demonstrating the nature of ‘literacy myths’ in the longer term perspective, will not need to build on these accomplishments. The work of historians such as Furet and Ozouf (1977) outlines parameters, baselines, and key interrelationships. These relationships offer opportunities to look more closely at linkages and try to identify factors and interactions. These interactions range from literacy’s relations with class, gender, age and culture of the themes of economic development, social order, mobility and stratification, education and schooling, actual uses of literacy, language and culture, books and publishing, etc.

Secondly, rigorous comparative study needs to be developed. The complexity and differences of measures and meanings of literacy create serious difficulties for such work. Contextualization is essential for any meaningful comparison to be developed. There is also a need to identify indicators of levels and quality of literacy to go beyond the dichotomies that prevail at present (literate/illiterate).

Thirdly, literacy studies only have meaning in context. Contexts for future analysis range from acquisition, use, and action to those of individual, family, group or community, gender, or social class. Literacy’s relationship to personal or collective well-being needs to be examined in a more contextualized manner as well. Historical ethnographies and histories of popular culture need to include literacy.

Fourthly, there is a need for a critical examination of the conceptualization of literacy. The problems in treating literacy as an independent variable and the confusion created are becoming increasingly clear to historians.

Graff, also calls attention to the relevance of the history of literacy for a number of policy issues in both developing and industrialized countries. Historical analysis can well

contribute to what is called 'literacy crises'. Literacy's relations to social and economic development are complex. The consequences of literacy are neither direct nor simple. Literacy is never neutral. There is no one route to universal literacy. In the history of the Western world, there are different configurations of roles for public and private schooling in the attainment of high rates of popular literacy, as well as informal and formal, voluntary and compulsory schooling. Mass literacy (in terms of bible reading) was achieved in Sweden without formal schooling or instruction in writing (Johansson, 1987, Lindmark, 2003). High rates of literacy followed in some form from all these approaches.

Historical analysis also shows that the balance sheet is not a simple one for crucial questions such as how does literacy contribute to economic and individual wellbeing of persons in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts. The costs and benefits of alternative paths can be better understood. Thus, the connections and disconnections between literacy and commercial development, (a generally positive relationship), and literacy and industrial development (often a negative one, at least in the short run), offer important case studies. The data of the past strongly suggest that a simple, linear modernization model of literacy as prerequisite for development and development as stimulant to increased levels of schooling will not suffice.

Also, there is no simple link between literacy and social development. Since ancient times, religious and political leaders have recognized the uses of literacy and schooling. They have often seen them as potentially dangerous and a threat to patterns of authority. Increasingly, they came, however, to conclude that literacy, if carefully controlled, and structured in formal institutions expressly for education and transmission of literacy could be a powerful force for certain ends. The 16th century Reformations might be seen as the first major effort to spread literacy widely in Europe. The Enlightenment provided the philosophical basis for the 'modern' reforms of popular schooling.

History also illustrates the important uses of literacy for personal advancement, collective action, entertainment, etc. The role of social class and group-specified demands for literacy's skills, the impact of motivation and the growing perceptions of its value and benefits are among major factors that explain the historical contours of changing rates of popular literacy. In other words, 'demand' must be appreciated as well as 'supply'.

Literacy's limits and its roles in promoting and maintaining hegemony need to be studied further too. This is especially the case during the transitions from pre-industrial social orders based in rank and deference to the class societies of commercial and then factory capitalism. The integrating and hegemony-creating purposes of literacy provision through formal schooling increased. Schooling based on a strict moral order and frequently low levels of basic literacy and numeracy became more and more an essential part of maintaining social stability, especially during social and economic transformations. Political and religious leaders saw the value of schooling to promote the values, attitudes and habits considered essential to order, integration, cohesion and some forms of progress. People's understanding and acceptance of literacy for their own purposes provides another perspective for historical research. Indeed, historians of education have

made a major contribution to the process additionally with personal histories and oral histories.

II. History of literacy in Europe

A. The appearance of the state and statistics

David Vincent chronicles and analyzes the development of ‘cultural counting’ as a distinct means to identify, categorize and eventually develop the institutions and bureaucracies of national systems of education and their outcomes starting in the mid-19th century (Vincent, 2000). He refers to Sweden as the first country to both promote ‘universal’ literacy (at least in terms of ability to read the Bible) and seek to measure its acquisition in some form (through annual examination registers kept by Lutheran pastors in the 17th and 18th century). According to Vincent, the practice of keeping records to be compared and analyzed (such as those referred to in Graff Table 1), goes back to the mid-19th century in Europe, both in countries making progress and in those lagging behind. He refers to Russia as an example of a European country nearly at the bottom of any index of progress except in the means used to measure its backwardness (Vincent, 2000, page 5). In terms of literacy, the social practice of reading and writing was separated from its context in order to give it some measurable definition, thus beginning a long complex history of the creation of a social, political, and moral problem. This phenomenon takes place at the same time that ‘education’ is being singled out as something that occurs outside the family, the workplace or the community at a special period in life that becomes ‘childhood’. The primary impetus for the creation of categories, counting and distinct educational institutions in the mid-19th century is of course the development of the nation state. Prior to this time, Protestant or Catholic record-keeping could only make limited progress in the spiritual qualities it sought to measure. The state, however, began to gather statistical data on some form of literacy measurement as early as 1827 in France (literacy of conscripts), just a few years before the first state schooling appears. Marriage register signatures were published as early as 1854 and census data was gathered for educational levels in 1866 and 1872. Vincent explains the association of the state with statistics by the interdependence of literacy and bureaucracy. Public officials began to gather data and encourage teachers to accept a ‘culture’ of reporting and inspection. In France in 1877, a retired school teacher, Louis Maggiolo, undertook the first large-scale historical study of literacy based on parish registers and then went on to develop a reporting system in which some 16,000 state-employed schoolteachers participated.

In the ensuing period, literacy measurement became the means by which the state demonstrated its success in pursuing its ends and making effective use of taxpayers’ contributions across Europe. Even at this early time, the capacity to measure a given outcome was already important. In fact, even poor performance or an unacceptable result as measured could be as useful as consistent achievement. By demonstrating disparities with other regions or countries, reformers could demonstrate the need for greater state expenditure. Progressively, homogeneity of basic literacy levels nationally and internationally became an important goal. And the state was better positioned than

church, family, private initiative or the market to gather the data to record progress towards that goal. Further, these other centers of power and authority did not have literacy acquisition as a primary intended outcome in any case. Progressively also attention was directed to monitoring the suppliers (teachers) of a technical skill rather than its consumers (learners). Teachers, as they gained corporate awareness, resisted such means to control them as payment by results (Simon, 1974, Vincent, 2000).

Vincent sees professional historians as caught up in 19th century bureaucrats' measures of achievement as well. There is an irresistible need to gather data to measure progress. Every European country analyzed through census data, marriage registers, data on recruits, etc. by historians shows uneven change, but there is no doubt about the ultimate direction of that change. Lags and gaps within social groups, within regions or across nations can be identified but all in terms of moving towards the goal of universal literacy. Literacy as an essential and separate communication tool is established as a mass outcome of state intervention, albeit in very limited or carefully-controlled forms.

B. An approach to looking at change

The actual uses and meanings of literacy in 19th century Europe are much more complex than that which was being measured. Nonetheless, historians of European literacy consider that the type of data available was sufficiently similar to permit cautious comparison. The discussion that follows is drawn essentially from the work of David Vincent. He identifies three phases of change and three groups of countries in Europe. Prior to 1800 a number of countries in the north and northwest had achieved widespread reading skills in terms of decoding text. He identifies Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Scotland and Geneva in the lead with parts of France, Germany and England nearing the same conditions. Just behind these two groups, he identifies another set of countries where most communities are found to have at least some households which own books and where high levels of literacy are to be found among the higher social classes. In eastern and southern Europe, however, literacy was rare at any level and in rural areas, was virtually non-existent.

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here or end of paper

Tables 3 and 4 taken from Vincent (2000) indicate two phases in the period after 1800. Before the 1860s, the most advanced countries had already made modest progress in reducing illiteracy defined in terms of the ability to sign the marriage register or through records of tests for army recruits and census respondents. Countries in the inner and middle bands of Table 3 show falls of between 10 and 20 points for men, and similar if not consistent trends for women in Table 4. The relative positions of these countries do not change, except for Sweden, which focused on reading to the complete neglect of writing until the 19th century and only began to catch up with other northern and western countries where some form of writing was more developed earlier on. By the 1860s, these countries could consider that a minority of their populations still lacked rudimentary literacy skills. Only Prussia, however, appeared close to being in a position to actually envisage achieving universal literacy. Countries in the outer band, however, had only

effected small and fragile change. Their progress was apparently in taking stock of their own backwardness. During the latter third of the 19th century, change became more sustained throughout Europe. Countries in northern and western Europe were registering about 10 per cent illiteracy. Even countries such as Belgium and Ireland where some 25 per cent of men still could not sign their names, were making progress. As Europe prepared for war, most countries had prepared their recruits to be able to read instructions on weapons and write to their families to some extent. Only eastern and southern European countries remained outside this developing pattern. In 1900, Russia, Italy, Hungary and Spain were behind the levels reached a hundred years earlier in other parts of Europe. Balkan countries showed overall percentages of 12 and 39. (Vincent, 2000, page 11). These countries did not catch up until the middle of the 20th century. Nonetheless, the ability to use the written word was spreading in these countries to some extent in higher social classes and the countries themselves were less isolated from the rest of Europe.

Between the Napoleonic wars and World War I, Prussia and France went from some 30 points of difference in male illiteracy to a negligible amount. Also, disparities between men and women were diminishing in terms of ability to sign the marriage register. In the most advanced countries, the shortfall between women and men was likely to be less than 10 per cent. In the second group of countries, it was between 10 and 25 per cent. An examination of the data analyzed by Vincent seems to show that the gap between women and men widened initially in the 19th century. However, over the period as a whole, women's illiteracy fell faster than men's so that by 1913, there was a very small measured difference. But the rates and reasons for change were quite varied according to context. Examples cited include 19th century Estonia where women were likely to have made greater progress by being allowed to remain in school longer than boys (called upon to work earlier). Or in southern and eastern England in the late 1880s, girls sometimes outperformed boys. In most instances, across countries, the distinction seems to be at least largely due to changing local conditions and demand for child labour.

The growth of national education systems of course was largely responsible for reducing rural and urban disparities as well as those between girls' and boys' literacy. Books were always more readily available in urban areas as well as the institutions to convey the means to read them. The concentrations of populations in urban areas in turn had an obvious impact on markets for both. Religious, secular, professional and private forms of learning were all concentrated in larger towns and cities as was the production of virtually all-print media. Also, when literacy levels were to spread, the standards in cities were the obvious take-off point for rural areas. Primarily rural countries in Europe effected little change during the 19th century as compared to countries with strong industrializing and urbanizing forces. But even within the industrializing and urbanizing sectors, changes in literacy rates were uneven and in some instances, non-existent. Within countries, and within sex, geography and occupation, patterns of literacy acquisition remained uneven throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. In countries, such as France, the disparities between the north, northwest on the one hand and the south west on the other, were actually maintained while church and state were vying, and then cooperating, to create a national education system. Recently unified countries such as

Italy and Belgium or different parts of the Austrian Empire continued to register major regional disparities. The early Soviet Union inherited an intensely multilingual population with literacy rates ranging from 70 per cent in major urban areas to 1 per cent or less among Chechen or Ingush (Lewis, 1972, Medlin et al, 1971).

While the 18th and above all 19th century registered the growing notion of the importance of universal literacy, it is also important to note increased disparities that were the direct outcome of the forms of this expansion. In a period where childhood and formal schooling of one form or another is becoming the norm, albeit unevenly, entire cohorts in terms of age group are left out of this change. So, residual illiteracy that is due to linguistic, geographic, social class, or sex also is linked to the fact that age groups outside the effort to provide some form instruction get left behind. For example, this appears to be the case in Sweden in the first mass literacy campaign in the 17th century and in Spain in the first half of the 20th century. (Vincent, citing Johansson, 2000, page 14). For the Napoleonic period in France, no such difference exists but then it appears at the beginning of the 20th century where some 30 per cent of women over fifty and men over sixty-five could not sign their names or some two million men and some three million women considered to be illiterate. (Furet and Ozouf, 1977).

Yet another complicating factor in interpreting literacy levels through this emerging data is the role of the family as a cultural unit. Vincent, Simon, Graff and a host of other historians of literacy and formal schooling in Europe and North America will argue that reading and writing in formal settings are promoted by public authorities to circumscribe popular protest and dissent that was communicated by oral and communal means, the goal being to establish the authority of the state. Education systems were increasingly intended to extend public control to what had previously been a more private domain. Statistical collection aimed to identify individual skills and attributions. Census returns and signatures on marriage registers increasingly identified such individuality but they were actually based on either household reporting or the creation of new family units. A closer look by historians at this evidence leads to new understandings of who actually possessed literacy skills and in which occupations and geographical locations differences were to be found. A conclusion of this re-examination of data is that throughout the 19th and well into the 20th century, literate and illiterate were mingled socially by marriage, by age in family, by geographic location, if less so professionally. Secondly, European history displays all the characteristics of the social uses of literacy described earlier on by Graff. A recognition of the privacy associated with reading and writing as an individual act has to be situated in an understanding of the notion of shared resources among the labouring poor. Poor communities survived not on the basis of self-sufficiency but rather based on ties of family, kinship or association either in rural areas or in urban centers. Literacy skills could be purchased, for example for communication with a family member who had emigrated or to decipher a newspaper or official document.

As the recognition that literacy needed to be defined in a more complex manner became evident, for many reasons, the European state began to question the significance of a signature on a register, self-reporting on a census or to an army recruiter. For example, the Ministry of War in Denmark in 1873 distinguished recruits on the basis of six

categories of literacy: ability to compose a text; to sign a name and to read print and hand-writing; to sign and read only print; to read print and handwriting but not sign; to read print only and not sign; and to sign but not read at all. (Vincent, 2000, page 17). In another example, the most literate society in 1886, Germany with a population of fifty million, identified that some twenty million could read the Bible, hymn books or almanacs, some thirty million could read a newspaper, some ten million could manage 'demanding literary subjects', some two million read regularly the classics and some one million 'followed literary developments'. (Vincent, 2000, page 18). (Such studies foreshadow the late twentieth century and current pre-occupation with more sophisticated measurement of literacy levels).

C. Dynamics of change and the role of schooling for literacy

As the first section of this paper has already argued based primarily on Harvey Graff's warnings of the complexity of any understanding of the actual role of literacy and what he calls the 'literacy myth', so too, the claims made by the growing formal schooling and data collection needs of the 19th century and early 20th century public bureaucracies also need to be re-addressed. By and large this paper reports the skepticism of historians of education and literacy who are questioning simplistic causal links being established with one argument or another. Their skepticism is potentially particularly useful at international level where policies may be alternatively driven by the hope that an economic or a rights-based justification for some form of educational expenditure, depending on the current vogue, will be most likely to affect decision-makers, donors or investors. Regardless of the purposes to be served by any particular justification of literacy provision on a mass scale, it needs to be recognized that literacy can only contribute to transforming the way an individual thinks and lives, if that individual uses it for such a purpose. The effects of using literacy skills have to be understood in the context in which they are put to use. This may seem an obvious statement. The historiography that is the focus of this paper serves a potentially very useful purpose in our contemporary examination of literacy's benefits and that of formal schooling.

In 19th and early 20th century Europe, inequalities related to class, sex, occupation, age, or ethnic and cultural background were more likely reproduced by schools than otherwise. Most European and North American countries have a considerable interdisciplinary literature to that effect. As emerging governments defined new ways of molding and controlling their populations through education, churches also renewed their authority by contributions to expanding that very public provision. Far from actually seeking a complete separation between church and state in many instances, governments relied heavily on religious institutions to extend provision where they were unable to penetrate, especially in rural areas. The implications of the rise in literacy levels that are shown by the graphs cited above among others, does not necessarily include individual or social transformation as a foregone result.

It has also been argued that people learned to read because they saw the need for themselves and that large-scale literacy actually preceded compulsory schooling.

Historians have long known that costs and benefits of literacy were decided in individual family units or communities long before states were evaluating such relative advantages. Historians have been also using the collection of data on school attendance as formal schooling became more prevalent in Europe to try to evaluate the impact on literacy levels. While the labouring poor in rural and urban areas resisted sending their children to school for a host of reasons, the transition to accepting such state provision can be partially analyzed by looking at early attendance figures.

Around 1880, theoretically, it is estimated that around fifteen per cent of the European population had children in elementary schools with up to three-quarters of them aged five to fourteen. In fact, only Prussia and some parts of Scandinavia had such demonstrable participation rates. In England and France, in spite of the growth of educational attendance figures, it seems that many parents were still resisting sending their children to school. According to Vincent (2000, page 57), some forty years after compulsory schooling legislation was enacted around two and a half-million school-age children were not at school and as recently as 1930, some one and a half million were still not in attendance. Right after World War I, nearly half of Russian children between eight and eleven never attended school. In most cases, it would take fifteen years to see an impact on signatures on local parish registers arising in some way from school attendance. But it remains difficult to identify a clear relationship between literacy levels and school attendance figures at national level. These kinds of data can be misleading for a variety of reasons which vary from country to country. For example, England shows increased provision of schooling at a much faster rate than literacy (as measured by church registers) in **Table 5 Growth in European school attendance and literacy rates, 1875-1900**. However, it is due rather to greater English reliance on private day schools and other unofficial and hence unrecorded provision than other European countries during the period of greatest growth in its literacy levels. In other countries, literacy levels seemed to improve faster than school attendance, not because of expanded educational provision but rather because children began to stay in school longer and potentially gain greater benefits from the experience. Furthermore, school attendance rates do not necessarily have much impact on literacy levels because of the distinction made between teaching some reading schools progressively over several years of schooling and virtually no instruction in writing until the end of the entire period (if at all). The extremely limited forms of literacy conveyed in 19th century and early 20th century schools are well-documented elsewhere and merit a much larger discussion than this paper can provide. (Chartier and Hebrard, 1989, Furet and Ozouf, 1971, Graff, 1987, Simon, 1974, Vincent, 2000). For example only, Vincent argues that the only members of European society whose lives were actually transformed by the increasing institutionalization of the teaching of literacy were the teachers. The impact of the latter's influence on children's literacy was minimal whereas their own corporate identities and role in the development of the public education industry were taking shape strikingly throughout this period. The primary role of effective, compulsory, national systems of elementary education was actually the negative one of ensuring that no child grew up without any grasp of reading.

“Mass literacy may thus be seen as a kind of relay race. In the early laps, the baton was carried variously by parents, older siblings, amateur private teachers and official

professionals. Only on the very last lap was it carried by the inspected school system alone, and only because the families of their pupils had sanctioned this transfer of responsibility.” (Vincent, 2000, page 60)

Place Table 5 about here or end of paper

D. Literacy and economic development: an historic perspective revisited

As the first section of this paper and much of contemporary literature as well argues, the cases for education are frequently bound up with arguments about economic outcomes. Historians find an association of literacy with economic growth at least back to the Enlightenment. Some support comes for this linkage. According to R.A. Houston: ‘Across the whole of Europe between the Renaissance and the beginning of the nineteenth century, literacy was intimately related to social position.’ (Houston, quoted in Vincent, 2000, page 64). This being said, income was also a factor alongside geography, population density, church and state intervention in relation to literacy levels. However, it is not obvious to conclude that some form of supply and demand for literacy led to accelerated economic growth in Europe. Alongside the arguments already raised earlier, Vincent recalls that it is extremely difficult to assess cause and effect. Parents who send children to school have a cost to bear even when such education is technically free and of course, there is a major cost to the state under such circumstances. Thus increased marriage register signatures might be seen as a result rather than a pre-condition of individual and national prosperity. Further, it is not easy to single out literacy as an isolated skill from the overall experience of institutionalized schooling and other impacts of the latter or any other personal or social characteristics in a specific occupational setting. Finally, it is not likely that generalizations can be made at the level of entire countries yet alone across Europe to explain the actual causal relationships in periods of rapid economic and educational change.

At the early stages of the development of modern education systems, the decision by poor families to send their children to school was not a once-off matter. Until schooling became both compulsory and was fully accepted by parents as an acceptable place for their children, the latter could be withdrawn often and regularly on any occasion. Even the less impoverished families reviewed the value and cost of school attendance for their children whenever necessity or conviction dictated. Family income security was undoubtedly a crucial pre-requisite to any consideration of sending a child to school for any period of time. Conversely, literacy is more readily linked to relative family prosperity. It is no accident that western countries that were nearing universal literacy near the end of the 19th century were the same countries which had avoided major famine for the first time in their history. (Vincent, 2000 page 66) As the vast majority of the European population of the 19th century was engaged on the land, diminishing crop failure would have been the best indicator of the ability to progressively put aside a small surplus for non-essential goods such as education or books. At the same time, governments were increasing their own areas of basic expenditure from defense, central administration, law and order to other more social services (education).

Disparities in economic terms in a country also have a relationship, if not necessarily a causal one, with literacy levels. It is likely that Iceland, with its particularly narrow social and income distributions, was the first European country to reach nearly universal literacy (still in terms of signatures) as a result of the relative lack of inequality. On the other hand, as also argued elsewhere in this paper, there is considerable support for the thesis originally advanced by Michael Sanderson that the factory system was directly destructive of educational standards. This argument states that literacy rates suffered under the first Industrial Revolution, notably in England. More detailed research needs to be undertaken but currently it appears that the low levels of skills required in early industrialization, especially in factories, had a negative impact of individual and collective investment in literacy acquisition. In addition, low literacy levels were partly due to the large numbers of migrants from rural areas to rapidly-changing urban centers. Very probably, these migrants would increase the illiterate populations in urban areas at a rate that existing forms of literacy provision could not meet even if there were a greatly increased demand. The initial phase of rapid urbanization undoubtedly overwhelmed all social provision, from churches to clubs and self-help societies and certainly existing schools. More teachers, schoolrooms and materials would have to have been found simply to maintain existing levels of provision.

Migration is often invoked as either undertaken by the most enterprising and potentially educated populations or by those forced to do so by sheer necessity. It is an exceptionally difficult subject to analyze in its relation to literacy. Educational reformers have long promoted education for social and individual changes. Conservative forces have seen education as a tool to mold and control. With the increasing place of literacy, especially through the creation and expansion of a European postal system also during this period, it is often argued that families learned of better or different life possibilities from other family members who had already immigrated by ambition or necessity. While there is evidence that migrants from Russia to America or internally within European countries, were more likely to have some knowledge of the written word, it is also the case that sheer necessity also motivated population movement with or without any literacy skills. It did not require any particular educational level to consider that there would be better occupational opportunities in urban areas than in the famine-ridden countryside. There were considerable occupations in industry or service that did not require any individual literacy skills. A closer examination of individual occupations in contexts is essential to understanding where and to what degree any form of literacy is needed. One well-known study by Mitch identifies only the police and prison services as manual occupations that required some reading and writing in England. (Mitch in Vincent, 2000, page 71). Probably most of the manual occupations that would have required some literacy in the 19th century would have been those responsible for the communications revolution itself (postal and railway workers, printers and compositors).

But even if it is possible to develop classifications of occupations and relate literacy rates to them through the kinds of data available at the time, there is the additional uncertainty as to how to assess the actual *need* for reading and writing skills in that setting. On the one hand, there is the direct use of such skills and on the other, there is there more

indirect application in a larger range of concerns associated with an individual's place in society. It is difficult to separate the culture rather than the practice of an occupation, including concerns of status, indirect economic strategies and recreational activities, etc. Available research seems to indicate that most workers in 19th and early 20th century Europe saw little growth or change in the role of the written word in the professional lives. Artisans had more economic transactions to record. Trade union officials would have more printed documents to scrutinize as well as initiate. Agricultural economies had slowly increasing need for written records of transactions. Vincent warns that it is important not to confuse the direction with the scale of change. He concludes that on the whole, the industrialization period is remarkable for how little manual labour was affected by the written word. Even job recruitment was conducted more by word of mouth than by any written means or advertisement.

A contemporary argument for increased investment in schooling also runs that opportunity costs can be important in family decisions to educate their children. But 19th and first half of the 20th century Europe experienced a phenomenon that is also relevant today. More literate populations did not necessarily mean better access to secure employment. While increased educational opportunity was created through schooling, there was no parallel increase in the number of jobs available for which such skills were actually needed. In fact, an increasing pool of candidates for higher level positions increased competition and drove down salaries in certain occupations. And as it became increasingly clear that many families would consider the education of their children, especially their daughters, prohibitively costly, the enforcement of compulsory school attendance became more and more formalized.

Another consequence of making elementary schooling compulsory was the need to justify or certify the outcomes of the experience. As learning to read and presumably write became more secular and linked to individual well-being, that accomplishment needed to be recognized. The history of formal school certification and examination can be studied in terms of labour market preparation in this manner as well. For the purposes of this discussion, performance in reading, writing and arithmetic became early on the basic unit of exchange between school and state, teacher and family, and education system and labour market. The letters, words and sentences that a child could read and/or write or calculations made enabled the state to decide whether its resources were well-spent. Parents could conclude whether the years their children spent in school were useful. Employers could select employees. But credentialism appears to have spread more slowly to manual labour employment than to schooling. Very few occupations relied on the certification of schools. Much more reliance remained on a worker's family background and upbringing.

Even after World War I, not to mention World War II, European children with four to six years of elementary schooling were unlikely to benefit employment-wise from better opportunities. In France, for example, less than three per cent of candidates for the secondary school examination (baccalauréat) were from working class backgrounds. In Germany, the percentage was roughly seven. In England, as a result of the Balfour Education Act of 1902, only one in fourteen elementary school boys and one in twenty

girls managed to attend a maintained secondary school and only one in 100 boys and one in 3000 girls went to university. Vincent (2000, page 81) concludes that,

“On the whole, the development of national education systems in European countries ‘contributed powerfully to the widening divide between the status and material rewards of manual and white-collar labour. Their role in reproducing inequalities of birth far outstripped their capacity to assist the able and ambitious to escape their occupational inheritance.... Most boys, and an even greater proportion of girls who were now able to write their names, grew up to perform the same tasks as their less literate parents, or even fell in their occupational status...In no European society is it possible to derive a graph of increasing mobility which compares with the steep rise in marriage register signatures and school attendance. The more literate a society became, the more children, in this sense, wasted their education.”

This is not to argue completely pessimistically that literacy produced no positive results. What is to be found, with contemporary parallels, is that occupational movements took place within the working class rather than upwards into the middle classes or another higher occupational rank. Literacy is likely to have reduced the significance of family background primarily within the ranks of manual work. For example, in Marseilles, France, higher literacy rates did not affect outcomes for artisans but do appear to have influenced peasant decisions from rural areas to move to the city where employment possibilities were seen to be greater. By the second half of the nineteenth century, more jobs requiring literacy were certainly appearing. The proportion of the occupied workforce in Britain identified as ‘white-collar’ tripled between 1851 and 1911. Occupations in the paper, printing and publishing trades increased nearly six times in the seventy years after 1841. Uniformed working class jobs increased significantly. The best prospects were in countries like Finland, where the growth in demand for professionals, bureaucrats and entrepreneurs could not be met within the historically small middle and upper classes and hence greater numbers of the educated working class were upwardly mobile. (T. Myllantus, ‘Education in the Making of Modern Finland’, in Tortella, Education and Economic Development since the Industrial Revolution, pp 161-2, quoted in Vincent, 2000).

E. Education, literacy and national economic growth in Europe

While the link between individual well-being and literacy still remains a complex and deeply contextualized matter, so too does the relationship between national economic growth or development and literacy. Some economic historians find a ‘significant’ correlation between literacy rates and economic development in industrializing Spain (Nunez, quoted in Vincent, page 83) and Russia (Mironov, quoted in Vincent, page 83). It took a generation for the results to appear according to their studies. In England, the evidence points to the effect of informal structures of teaching artisan skills rather than formal teaching by professional educators at the early industrialization phase. A general conclusion regarding England is that it was well ahead of the rest of the world, in spite of its primary education system rather than as a result of it. (Bowman et al, 1971). E. Arnold Anderson, the University of Chicago economist of education arguing in the 1960s that a

40 per cent literacy rate is necessary for economic 'take-off', probably might have some significance in the developing country context more as a negative than a positive factor. His analysis might be applied for Russia and Spain, but certainly not for western European countries. As one of the other grandfathers of the economics of education, Mark Blaug argued, Anderson's figures display no significant correlation in the range of 30 to 70 per cent literacy rates, which is the situation of western economies when they found themselves in their own period of industrial 'take-off'. (Anderson and Blaug, cited in Vincent, 2000, page 83, Bowman et al, 1971). Vincent points out that England's most obvious rival during the period of industrial take-off was France. Furet and Ozouf have demonstrated that the literacy levels were one of the few indicators of social and economic health not to have been seriously harmed by the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

Sandberg studying Sweden in the 18th century noted that its reading skills were more widely distributed than any other country with equivalent natural resources. He concluded that a literate workforce only affected economic performance when it had an external reason to expand. When international demand added value to Swedish forests in the second half of the 19th century, the tradition of teaching children then was transformed into an occupational category. Literacy may well have played a significant role by expanding the consumption of paper as it did throughout Europe. Once the economy was growing, the fact that the state did not have to divert expenditure to create a new school system may have contributed to the pace of the process. But even here, recent analysis of the Swedish case, in relation to other European countries, has seriously questioned the scale of the literacy effect. It seems that the driving force in the Scandinavian economies remained the international flows of trade, migration and capital.

All the European countries demonstrate that there was no single narrative of literacy and economic development at the level of the national economy or across sectors in other countries. Generalizations are only that. Investment in literacy is measurable in terms of educational expenditure, but there is no clear link between the two factors. Richer countries tended to spend more on education than poorer ones. The former achieved male literacy rates of 50 per cent by the beginning of the 19th century. But subsequently, their gross domestic product grew faster than the measurable output of their education systems. In England, the economy expanded three times faster than male literacy between 1820 and 1900, and in France twice. Further, the later a country was to industrialize, the greater the relative increase in its educational provision. At two ends of the spectrum, Germany's GDP expanded eight times faster than its high male literacy rates between 1870 and 1900, whereas Russia's level grew seven times faster than its GDP during the same period.

In sum, Vincent (2000, page 85) states the limits of generalization: "...early industrialization required a long period of relative prosperity during which time the infrastructure of a complex market economy, including basic literacy, could be put in place. Thereafter, a continuing increase of investment in education could be afforded in the context of an economy which through its own dynamic was growing even more rapidly. The more delayed the take-off of the economy on the other hand, the less in

absolute terms was spent on luxuries such as education, but the heavier the burden appeared in relation to the productive sector, whose growth may have been held back by the need to invest in the nations' infrastructures."

He argues that no further generalization is really possible. There is no obvious relationship established between mechanized production and economic activity in general. The factory system at the centre of the Industrial Revolution did not need or create a literate workforce during the period in which Britain dominated. A good level of communication skills was all that were necessary. Later, when the industrial processes evolved from artisan techniques to technical engineering, then some factory workers needed to be capable reading blueprint and other documents. This may mean that later industrial development could indeed benefit from public education but it does not demonstrate any consequence from literacy levels. It may also mean that countries like Britain with low levels of public investment in education would become uncompetitive. Even the attempts to link literacy and economic growth for Germany have not been successful.

Finally, it is not possible to distinguish an operational relationship between economic behaviour and education. The distinction needs to be made between an individual's enhanced capacity to look for opportunities thanks to literacy skills and the actual application of those skills and the need for them in a specific economic setting. If any link is to be made for literacy and the economy in the late 19th century, it seems to be in the use, not the possession, of literacy and, in overall production rather than factory manufacture. Also, it may be that widespread illiteracy would hold back an economy, especially where it had to start at a relatively advanced level. The conclusion remains that education was relatively expensive and needed economic prosperity more than contributed to its creation and development. While it remains difficult to advance a convincing human capital argument for literacy and education provision, it is clear that 19th and early 20th century Europeans became literate when they saw individual or family need. They did not do so to become more cooperative or docile workers nor were they readily convinced by credentials of schooling that could not, in fact, provide them with upward social and professional mobility.

F. Literacy and the state: authority, containment and language

An examination of the history of literacy and the separate histories of formal schooling in the 18th, 19th and first half of the 20th centuries in Europe demonstrate their complex relationships. For the most part, however, as a result of distinct processes throughout Europe, the modern states all considered that universal reading and writing skills as well as formal schooling were necessary conditions and expressions of their authority. By schooling, any state could ensure that its values and order reached into the family. Regardless of political upheavals across countries, formal education could instill those values in the most effective manner if basic skills of reading (and perhaps writing) were widely distributed in the population. This thematic section of the paper can only address a few key ways in which this construction and reinforcement of the nation state took place in Europe through increased authority and schools that reproduced the existing social

order, language of instruction and the containment of alternative and independent expression.

The emerging state needed fairly widespread literacy in its population and increasingly literacy provision became dependent on the state to ensure access to some form or level of competence in using the written word. By the middle of the 20th century, the situation would have evolved to the extent that some form of education (including literacy) would become a human right enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And later in the 20th century, during the 1970s, an increasing number of countries would have to respond to education reformers and activists, non-state providers, voluntary bodies, and trade unions alike to ensure that they actually provide 'A Right to Read' in their adult populations with limited basic skills. (Limage, 1975, 1987, 1990).

But starting in the 18th century in Europe, countries as different as Poland, Prussia, France, Italy, Belgium or Russia began to develop bureaucracies to ensure that changing state structures might provide the conditions for political and social cohesion. Mass education was promoted to ensure some level of protection against external threat and internal division. These nascent states of course were too fragile to face the various invasions and wars that took place but increasingly each one saw the usefulness of more formal education. And educational borrowing, the beginning of comparative education, was already underway, if not systematic. For example, the larger German kingdoms that lost to the centralized French state began to re-think their educational provision. As the former grew stronger as a result of such consolidation, they in turn influenced others to strengthen their bureaucracies, especially formal education. Denmark made a greater commitment to mass education in the 1880s as it looked at the unrest to the south. (Graff, 1987, Vincent, 2000, Furet and Ozouf, 1971).

The processes by which states, such as France extended control over the minds of the next generation, were complex and certainly not continuous or coherent. However, certain key factors of the French Revolution's nation-building endeavour have survived to the present and are reproduced or questioned around the world. Firstly, both republicans and royalists agreed that education and censorship were important to the future nation. Book and newspaper censorship played an important part in the process but above all, the school was seen as the place where instruction would take place in the truths and facts that constitute legitimate knowledge (Chartier and Hébrard, 1986). The state would guarantee through its civil servants, teachers, that only dispassionate and legitimate knowledge would be conveyed to youth. (For the texts of all educational policies since the Revolution, see Allaire and Frank, 1995)

The French revolutionary vision of mass education is worth citing here:

“To offer all individuals of the human race the means to see to their needs and ensure their well-being, to know and exercise their rights, to know and fulfill their obligations; to offer to everyone the possibility to improve his skills, to be capable of fulfilling the social responsibilities for which he may be called upon, to develop all potential talent received by nature and to establish equality of condition between citizens and real political

equality recognized by law: these should be the first goals of a national system of instruction (schooling); and seen from this perspective, this goal is a duty of justice for the state (public power).....

Since the first condition of all instruction is to teach only truths, institutions established by the state (public power) must be as independent as possible of any political authority...that independence is best ensured by the assembly of representatives of the people, because it is the least prone to corruption...and the least likely to be an enemy of enlightenment and progress than any other power....

Thus, instruction should be universal.... It should be distributed with all the equality that available resources allow.... No public institution should have the authority or even the possibility to prevent the development of new truths, the teaching of theories which contradicts its particular policies or its short-term interests....” From Condorcet’s Report on the *General Organization of Public Instruction presented to the National Legislative Assembly* of 20 April 1792 (quoted and translated by Limage, 2001, page 227 from Allaire and Frank, 1995, pages 25-26)

This generous and all-encompassing view of the power of universal schooling to shape individual and collective well-being contains the seeds of a philosophy of education that is still timely and largely unquestioned. Firstly, equality of opportunity is based on the same treatment for all. Secondly, legitimate knowledge is to be defined by the state acting as dispassionately as possible through its teachers. Thirdly, although not explicitly stated in this text, social cohesion and equality are to be conveyed through acquisition of literacy in the national language, French. These basic principles continue to determine French educational policy to this day. And yet, when they were first introduced, they were far from being popular among the linguistically, culturally and religiously diverse populations in the regions of France. It took years to ensure that regional languages be banished from public expression although it was less difficult to ban them from the schools. (De Certeau, Julia and Revel, 1975) (Further discussion of the France is taken up in the case study section of this paper).

The French approach to social cohesion and conveying the messages of the Revolution involved a single unifying language, French, and a highly centralized government and education system. On the other hand, it is interesting to compare this approach with other state building in Europe at a later period. The Belgian and Swiss cases are ones in which social cohesion and the very survival of a nation-state depended on a federal approach to government and education. Hence, the latter introduced by political necessity, different languages of instruction in each part of the country. In Belgium, Flemish, French, and in a small area, German, are used separately as first languages of instruction with limited obligation to learn the other official languages outside the language territory. Switzerland maintained its cohesion on the same principles. On the other hand, the Russian Revolution and the creation of a socialist state across highly linguistically, culturally and geographically diverse populations involved a radically different approach. (Lewis, 1972).

The Bolshevik Revolution aimed for total political, social and economic transformation. In its early stages, it embarked on a course of complete control or centralization in one

sense but accompanied by mass education. In order to convey the revolutionary ideas, however, early philosophers of education from Krupskaya to Makarenko to Lenin himself, supported literacy and formal schooling in all the languages of the country. The systematic efforts necessary to actually implement such ambitious policies however took considerable time and resources. In this respect, the Russian experience seems to lend itself to the same critical and nuanced evaluation that historians of literacy have applied elsewhere. On the positive side, many local languages which would not have survived otherwise, were maintained and developed for use as official languages and languages of instruction. Bilingual education in its earliest forms became essential as Russian was, of course, the language of national cohesion. But rather than attempting to stamp out the use in the public sphere of local vernaculars, the Russian Revolution made use of all the tools to hand to convey the new ideas.... a very different approach to the French one.

The implications for literacy acquisition are immense. While no uniformity of school or adult literacy learning opportunities was possible and certainly a rearguard action at all levels was an obvious outcome (parents and children of all social classes for different reasons), in both instances, it seems the immediate benefits were those who carried out the policies, the teachers. As discussed earlier, in this period, the state was creating its authority and developing its bureaucracy to carry out its policies. The teaching profession was emerging and developing the contours it would hold to this day. It seems that the construction of a professional identity for this emerging occupation was the greatest single outcome across the diversity of European historical experience (Vincent, 2000). At another level and across European countries too, the rise of mass education was resisted by those who wished to maintain their independence from authority. The educational provision through trade and artisan unions, political protest and other working class or even religious groups constitutes another history of literacy that has been studied systematically by many historians of literacy and formal education already cited in this paper. Initiatives such as the hedge schools in Ireland represent an important strand of popular demand for literacy outside the controls or censorship of oppressive authority and certainly influenced literacy levels to some extent. (McManus, 2004).

III. Case studies

A. Elements towards a history of literacy and educational provision in the Middle East

The invention of printing in Europe had an immediate and profound effect on access to the written word and, alongside the Reformation, greatly spurred access to literacy. The history of literacy and indeed, the history of religion and learning, in the Middle East are very different and much more difficult for historians to document with similar sources and evidence to those available for Europe and North America. Until the late 19th century and at a much more accelerated pace starting with the British presence, literacy and use of the written word was even more restricted than in other regions of the world for a number of reasons which have yet to be studied in depth. Then, when change did begin to occur, it took place at an even greater pace than was heretofore the case in other developing regions of the world under colonial regimes. Middle Eastern societies, and

Arab subjects in general of the Ottoman Empire were largely untouched by the changes in use of the written word in any form, books, press, written contracts, census data or birth/death records until the mid-nineteenth century in most areas, and not until the twentieth century in Palestine (by mandate definition, meaning the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea) According to Ayalon (2004), under Ottoman-Islamic rule since the early sixteenth century, Arab-speaking communities in the region had long lost the previous intellectual and scientific creativity of certain elites in the late Middle Ages. Political instability, domestic and foreign conflict and limited intellectual production primarily of a religious nature had long characterized the region, especially during the Ottoman period The use of writing, reading, collection of any forms of texts was confined to state officials, religious scholars and a very limited socio-cultural elite. Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire and the limited educational institutions employed Turkish, a foreign language to the various Arabic, and other language speakers of the region. For most of the populations, oral communication functioned effectively for their entire daily needs and books were irrelevant.

This state of affairs changed slowly and then abruptly. The somewhat slower encroachment of western imperialism on the societies of the Ottoman Empire was the first sign of change. Egypt and Lebanon were first to respond to the European attraction of state-run schools, printing, newspapers and so forth. After the middle of the nineteenth century, the demand for printing, the emergence of a periodical press, literary societies, exchanges with international colleagues, began in those countries. Pre-Mandate Palestine did not follow suit until the British actually began the process more systematically. However, elites in the region, especially following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution in Syria, Iraq and pre-Mandate Palestine, which were on the periphery, began to engage in intense cultural activity. By World War I, this activity was well under way.

A second wave of change and a much more dramatic context began after 1918 when the region changed from Islamic caliphate to European tutelage. Ayalon argues that the demand for information became urgent. Intense political change was underway and people needed to be part of the process. The wider public now recognized the need for new forms of knowledge through written texts: books, journals, newspapers, political pamphlets, posters, store signs, rally banners, handbills and so forth. Fairly abruptly, there was a hitherto inexistent demand for reading proficiency. While the Ottoman Empire had provided only extremely limited educational opportunities (in Turkish), the British mandate enacted real educational reform for the first time in the region, in Mandate Palestine in particular.

However, as Ayalon argues, the change, (and the evidence for that change, that was found over centuries in Europe, as in the previous discussion in this paper), was not at all an even process. *The spread of written messages did not necessarily mean the spread of individual reading.* Traditional communication of information by oral means remained the most immediate and effective way to disseminate the 'news', especially in the primarily rural areas of the region.

When the British started a ‘public’ education system in Mandate Palestine, for example, they were basically starting from scratch: no unified education system, no unified curriculum, no formally trained teachers and no teaching and learning materials in the languages of the country except in a few instances for certain Christian minorities and the Jewish private schools. Almost inevitably, the British initiatives left out the majority: older people (beyond school age), rural society, women and nomads. For the most part, demand for information was urgent and could not wait for individual reading proficiency. People in the region continued to rely on traditional means of communication where one proficient reader conveyed messages to the community or a literate family member (by some unknown measure of reading competence) read to others.

The very uneven spread of literacy in response to increased demand (met to some extent by traditional means of conveying information) and ‘colonial’ intervention, took place in a very specific context that has only barely been studied in the region. This lack of scholarly attention is partially due to the inexistence of written ‘evidence’ mentioned at the beginning of this section of the paper; partially due to the lack of preservation of written and printed material during the period of the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries; partly due to the limited research interest in the region until fairly recently for such study and partially due to the lack of priority given to educational reform for development in the Arab Middle East.

The Arab Human Development Report 2003 (UNDP, 2003) was the first highly-acclaimed example of region-wide critical attention to the need for fundamental educational reform by regional experts themselves. Its strategic vision for building a knowledge society in the region called for “*disseminating high quality education for all:...[with detailed proposals]...for reform in education...giving priority in early childhood learning; ensuring universal basic education for all and extending it at least to 10th grade; developing an education system for lifelong learning; improving the quality of education at all stages; giving particular attention to promoting higher education, and instituting independent periodic evaluations of quality at all stages of education.*” (UNDP, 2003, page 12).

These comprehensive aims for education in the Middle East as a whole are a far cry from the state of any form of formal education and literacy in earlier periods. The kinds of learning available in the period under discussion in this paper have only a distant connection to these aspirations. For reasons of space, the discussion that follows refers solely to available historical evidence for the state of education in ‘kittabs’ or religion-based and the schools set up under the British to illustrate some of the discontinuities discovered by historians in other parts of the world.

Students of cultural history in the Middle East are confronted with the impact of the Ottoman Empire first of all (of which primarily Arab-speaking countries were a part from the early 16th century. Printing was only introduced in the 18th century (although some non-Islamic populations had started somewhat earlier). But print only became important in the second half of the 19th century and only in Istanbul, Egypt, and Lebanon (Ayalon, 2004, page 13). In addition, there was no comparable tradition in the Middle East as

there was and is in Europe or non-Islamic societies for other forms of evidence about reading and writing (artistic depictions, paintings, novels, preservation of evidence of daily life, memoirs or even records of the few libraries that existed).

An early testimonial about the state of literacy in Mandate Palestine was that only some 2 per cent of the population in the area was literate (Ayalon, 2004, page 16). While this testimonial is essentially anecdotal, the first 'official' evaluation of literacy was reported by the general census of 1931 under the British mandatory government. The survey estimated that the literacy rate among sedentary Arabs, 7 years old and up was 20%. Among Muslims it was around 14% (men about 25%, women about 3%), and among Christians, 58% (men about 72%, women about 44%). This situation was estimated after about ten years of mandate-provided formal education. Another estimate made in 1947 placed overall Arab literacy in Mandate Palestine at 27%: 21% for Muslims (men 35%, women 7%) for Christians (men 85%, women 65%). These figures were based on the self-reporting that is still the basis of census-gathering data: questions to heads of households about (a) whether they can read and write and (b) whether they or any members of their households have been to school.

The limits of this kind of information are widely known. And as in Graff's lessons from the history of literacy studies discussed earlier in this paper, Ayalon also points out the absolute necessity of contextualizing what is meant by literacy and the uses to which it is put in that context. He also draws attention to the complexity of analyzing such considerations in rapidly-changing and poorly-documented contexts prior to 1948.

But by focusing on literacy as a set of skills in a practical sense to use the written word, one can survey the state of educational development cursorily in the region. All available literature has concluded that the period under the Ottoman Empire was deplorable for education and harks back to a vague earlier period when things were better. This 'better' period, however, was many centuries earlier and of course, did not refer to large-scale literacy possession. Nonetheless, there is agreement that the basis of the Muslim educational system in the region for centuries was the network of traditional koranic schools, the *kuttab*. The *kuttab* in terms of its organization may well have pre-dated Islamic times. Its sole purpose was to train pupils to be good Muslims by teaching them to recite sections of the Koran. A complement to the *kuttab* was the *madrrasah* where a chosen few studied Islamic law, Koran, and Arabic language. The *madrrasah* was normally connected to a mosque. The Ottomans did open some schools which were said to cater for some 8,000 pupils in a three-year course of study as well as some higher schools but these were never estimated to reach even 10 per cent of the relevant Arab age group. Missionary schools played a bigger role, especially following the First World War. They were operated by foreign missions, and the region's own various Christian groups. By and large, these schools were based on religious instruction as well. Ayalon estimates that altogether some 3.3% of the Arab population and some 20% of the school-age population received some form of instruction outside the *kuttab* at the time of the British Mandate.

Documentation of the British period is fairly widely available. The British introduced primary education, teacher training and opened educational establishments for agriculture, trade and vocational education. They introduced Arabic as the language of instruction, a welcome change from the Ottoman use of Turkish. Many (but not in rural areas) *kuttabs* were absorbed into the official system. Under the British, in Mandate Palestine alone, education for the Arab population increased six-fold, concentrating on primary education. A great demand for education in the Arab population is documented spurred on by example and need, notably, from the growing Jewish population with the high value they placed on all forms of learning.

In spite of all British efforts and others, only a third of Arab children of school age received any minimal education. The state of learning in the *kuttab* did not add to literacy acquisition opportunities either. The *kuttab* was the main form of education throughout the Muslim Ottoman Empire and remained so in spite of organizational change. It was almost always exclusively devoted to providing students with religious knowledge. *Kuttabs* were held in private homes mosques or other public buildings associated with religion. Children might enter between the ages of 5 and 8, almost exclusively boys only. Pupils might stay for an unspecified number of years or drop out as they case may have been. There is next to no documentation of actual numbers.

Literacy, indeed any form of learning in the modern sense, was absent. The primary objective was to train children in memorizing the Koran in its entirety or in part. The Koran (meaning literally ‘vocal reading, ‘calling’, or ‘proclaiming’) had a life as recited messages. Thus, primacy was on learning text by heart. In fact, once some memorization of text had taken place, the course of study was over. If there was any learning of the alphabet or actual attention to reading, it was for the most part without any written text. Repetition, memorization and recitation were handled in a rigorous atmosphere, often with an ‘instructor’ who may have had no particular reading skills himself. The ‘instructor’ for the most part had consigned some of holy Koran to memory and would recite that part to his pupils. Above all, for the most part these schools took place in conditions of fairly extreme poverty, poverty of conditions for the populations as a whole as well as poverty of teaching and learning conditions.

The difference in koranic schools between ability to recite part or some of Koran and the actual skill of independent reading and writing is essential to this discussion. The Arabic in Koran is not the same as the varieties of spoken Arabic. The distance is even greater in Islamic countries where other languages than Arabic are spoken and the scripts are non-Arabic. Further, it is possible to memorize and recite passages of Koran without any understanding of what is being said and a complete inability to identify the location of the written form of the memorized passage. And it is possible to memorize the text, find the passage in a written text and still not understand the meaning, having memorized also the visual layout of the letters on the page. (This is also, of course, true for other religion-based instruction of learning by memorization and takes place throughout history in Christianity, let alone other faiths. It is argued elsewhere in historical studies of literacy and histories of education in fact, that rote memorization has characterized most early forms of mass or public education as well as being a social control mechanism).

One of the numerous testimonials about the complexities of being able to look at text without any comprehension or actual reading skills follows: ‘Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, an acclaimed Palestinian writer, described such limited purpose technical practice in his Catholic school in Bethlehem in the 1920s. The children’s chorus, he related was placed in two separate wings with the text of the hymns they were singing located in the middle. This required half of the chorus to read the text upside-down, a practice they had to learn for themselves. *‘I thus learned to read any text, in Syriac or Arabic straight or upside-down equally well.... We all learned how to do it, but only a few of us comprehended these texts or even a part of them. We were in fact praying in a largely incomprehensible language although capable of reading it straight, upside-down or sidewise, in light or dark’*. (Ayalon, 2004, page 31).

To return to ‘modern’ education in the Middle East, with particular reference to the Ottoman Empire period, the knowledge to be conveyed appeared to be better than in the koranic schools. These schools appeared near the end of the Ottoman period, mainly in larger towns and to a much greater extent under British rule. They were intended to convey some form of reading, writing arithmetic, perhaps grammar and history, perhaps some sciences. Some teaching and learning materials became available, some slates, notebooks or even some printed books. British mandate schools were ostensibly aimed at improving literacy skills. They considered that four or five years of schooling would be adequate to ‘eliminate illiteracy’ among the children fortunate enough to attend. By and large, they introduced in Mandate Palestine the curriculum used in Egypt and in Lebanon, including instruction in Arabic and even some instruction in English. The historian of education, or literacy, however, has limited evidence of the actual changes that could have taken place in quality of instruction or material school facilities. It is to be expected that change in teachers’ training took time, that official level ‘reform’ was not necessarily followed by very immediate change, especially in rural areas. In fact, some evidence indicates that the new schools in rural areas were not much better than the *kuttabs*. This appears also to be partially the result of some colonial or mandate policy if not lack of resources, for Arab populations in rural areas. The limited education for a rural dweller was justified as ‘that innocent man, marked by simplicity, remote from the intricacies of civic culture...[who merely] needs to be guided in his work.’ (Ayalon, 2004, page 35).

Another major characteristic of even British-led change in educational provision is the neglect of girls’ education, primarily in Arab Muslim communities. Parents were not in favour of their daughters’ education in the previous period and that did not change. While some parents did send their daughters, essentially to missionary schools, the change was not marked, even in better-off social classes. Some success with single-sex girls’ schools was, however, obtained firstly in the late Ottoman Empire and subsequently under the British. Christian Arab communities were somewhat more likely to educate their daughters and private foreign schools in the region, put in place by missionaries, were also more likely to include girls. By the end of 1948, the boy/girl ratio was said to have decreased from 5:1 in the late Ottoman Empire to 4:1. (Ayalon, 2004, page 38)

B. Towards a history of literacy in a context of major social transformation: Vietnam

The Vietnamese case is particularly important in the context of this paper on the history of literacy and the separate histories of schooling and adult learning opportunities since it provides one of the major examples of how a society reaches into its own traditions and values to mobilize for ‘modernity’ in unique ways. Each of the other countries which recognized the significance of literacy acquisition and formal learning in the twentieth century to mobilize for major social, political and economic transformation (China, Cuba and the ex-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics notably) did so in remarkably similar ways and yet, made considerable progress by contextualizing and appropriating the most relevant contemporary knowledge on educational policy issues. (An outstanding example of such ‘modern’ decision-making is choice of languages of instruction. In the Russian case, multilingualism was a necessity for conveying the new social ideas and was an integral part of educational policy, (Lewis, 1972, Spolsky, 2004). Language choice and decisions about script are also part of direct Vietnamese policy that led to rapid spread of literacy in the period of 1945-1954 and subsequently.

The cultural and economic history of Vietnam contribute largely to an understanding of the place of literacy in Vietnamese society and the factors which contributed to the success of firstly North Vietnam and subsequently, re-unified North and South Vietnam to ensure nearly universal learning opportunities. (1) Between 1075-1919, Confucianist doctrine served as the backbone of intellectual and political institutional life in Vietnam. These are the dates of the first and last ‘*concours*’ or competitive examinations for the mandarinat in Vietnam. These examinations traditionally supplied the administrators for the Emperor’s kingdom. They were theoretically open to anyone regardless of class (except women and actors). Preparation for the examinations of course entailed years of study and the possibility of being supported by other members of one’s family. Those who failed the examinations usually continued their lives as ‘*lettré*’, living as teacher, public scribe, composer of poetry and dissertations on doctrine. In this context, a distinct schism separated the intelligentsia: a select minority went to live in the palaces of the mandarinat and the majority returned to the community’s daily concerns.

These *lettrés* returned to the ‘*commune*’ or basic unit of Vietnamese society. This notion of land and governance by ‘*commune*’ goes back to the first dynasty when Vietnam united under a centralized monarchy. This unification was effective because of a triple necessity, very much recognized at the time: the construction and maintenance of a system of dikes along the Red River Delta, the protection of national independence (threat of Chinese invasion) and protection of the particular feudal system against peasant uprising. (See bibliography in Limage, 1975, notably Nguyen-Huu-Khang, 1946) This latter point is important to understanding the more recent Vietnamese context. Since Vietnam was too small to maintain a standing army to protect against Chinese invasion at the time, the peasantry was also periodically called upon for that purpose and to repair the system of dikes which in turn prevented the flooding periodically devastating the country.

Until the 13th century, Buddhism remained the dominant religion. The peasantry of the times periodically rebelled against both the feudal system in place and the Buddhist notables. But during the period from the 11th to the 15th centuries, change was taking place. By the 15th century Vietnamese society was based on a system of self-sufficient and self-contained communes surmounted by a hereditary monarchy and a mandarin bureaucracy. The commune was the principal source of social cohesion. Collective life around the commune was particularly intense with a highly developed system of mutual aid reinforced by ties of clan, religious ceremonies, local elections, etc. In the cultural sphere, the Confucian *lettré* was central: the king ruled, the mandarin administered and the *lettré* shared the life of the people.

The confrontation between Buddhism and Confucianism became significant in the cultural and political life of Vietnam. The Confucianist is a humanist with great respect for learning and morality, with history serving to identify principles of right individual and social conduct. The original political notion of Confucianism involves a model prince at the top of the social hierarchy, who embodies all the fundamental qualities of Confucianism and protects the harmony and universal peace in his empire. However, this notion contains the ingredients for discord, which later came to the surface in the country's history. Confucianism was 'revolutionary' in its origin by placing the importance on social relations, rather than other higher powers as in Buddhism. Internally, a rigidity of interpretation periodically led to revolt by peasants and non-compliance with authority by certain *lettrés*.

The French colonial period widened the conflict. The monarchy and mandarins compromised themselves with the colonial powers. The *lettré* and the people were left to carry on the defense of an independent Vietnam on their own. These attempts at defense also showed the limits of even popular Confucianism. The same methods and ideas used to fight Chinese invasion were used ineffectively. There was no middle-class or bourgeoisie as in Europe to carry forward alternative ideas of social organization or democratic processes. From 1900 on, however, a certain Vietnamese elite was beginning to be trained in French and other European universities and contacts were developed through the French administrative methods. This new 'intelligentsia', while being cut-off for the most part from the vast majority of Vietnamese impoverished peasants, frequently became aware of its own contradictions. This new intelligentsia lived in the colonial cities, removed from 95% of the population. They used the French language and looked more to Europe than to their own traditions or resources.

The source of renewed social cohesion was to come from Marxist militants from 1930 onwards (the date of the foundation of the Indochinese Communist Party). By 1945, the success of this modernizing movement was proven with the foundation of a Vietnamese government independent of French colonial power. The first militants were drawn from Vietnamese with some schooling. They were employees in administration, schoolteachers, factory workers, agricultural workers in colonial plantations and sailors. They enjoyed some of the social prestige due to a literate person.

The successful adaptation of Marxism to Vietnamese Confucianist traditions has been the subject of a considerable literature. Above all, the adaptation of a form of ‘modern political organization and the successful establishment of an independent state in the most difficult conditions, characterize the specific context in which Vietnam achieved widespread formal schooling and literacy. The changes and adaptations that characterize the period of rapid spread of educational opportunities in Vietnam (1945-1954, then following re-unification in 1975) need to be seen in this larger political context.

When the French withdrew from Vietnam after their defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, some 95% of the Vietnamese people in the south were estimated to be illiterate. According to the Annuaire Statistique de l’Indochine (cited in Limage, 1975), there was 1 university (Hanoi); 3 Indochinese secondary schools; 6 higher primary schools and 6 French secondary schools (lycées): In the north, a mass integrated literacy campaign combined with flexible and integrated learning opportunities had provided basic skills learning for nearly all the population (Belloncle, 1984, Bhola, 1982, Limage, 1975).

The spread of literacy was enormously facilitated by several key national language policy decisions. Firstly, the Vietnamese language became the official language of the country and a Latinized script, the *quoc ngu*, greatly facilitated learning, since the Chinese ideogram was much more difficult to acquire. Secondly, the Vietnamese set about language planning and development in order to ensure that Vietnamese could convey all the modern scientific, political and social notions, rather than simply borrowing terms and expression from French or English, wherever possible relying on Sino-Vietnamese roots (Limage, 1975).

Prior to 1945, militants seeking to mobilize their compatriots to overthrow French colonial rule, created the Association for the Propagation of Quoc Ngu. The Association began its literacy work in the North in 1938, in the center of the country in 1939 and in the south in 1943. Between 1938 and the declaration of independence in 1945, some 70,000 people were taught reading and writing in a semi-clandestine fashion. The declaration of independence showed the importance attached to universal literacy (Limage, 1987, page 90):

“This new education is now in its organizational stage. It is certain that primary education should be compulsory. In the very near future, an order would be promulgated on the compulsion of learning of the national script aimed at total literacy. To fulfill this extremely important task, we should not wait until things become normal, but, right in this difficult circumstances, we are resolved to carry it out”.

This affirmation was quickly followed by a demand for commitment by President Ho Chi Minh in October 1945, for a vast literacy campaign:

“In order to preserve national independence, in order to achieve national prosperity and power, all the Vietnamese people should be well conscious of their rights and obligations....; and first of all, they should know how to read and write the national script.... The illiterates should make every effort to learn. The literate husbands should

teach their illiterate wives, the literate brothers should teach their illiterate sisters, the literate children should teach their illiterate parents, the literate masters should teach their illiterate servants, the rich should form classes at their private homes to teach the illiterates” (quoted in Limage, 1987, page 90).

Rapid spread of literacy in Vietnam took place in fact in a series of four campaigns, three in the north and one in the south. The first campaign was launched immediately after Vietnam declared its independence from France in August 1945, between October 1945 and December 1946. It reached 3,020,000 people. The second campaign took place from June 1948 to June 1950 and reached 8,109,600 Vietnamese. The third campaign was held from 1956-58 and reached 2,161,300 people including some 231, 700 members of ethnic minorities. A fourth campaign was carried out in the south after reunification in 1975. The importance and centrality of literacy to the major social and political change and above all, the war of independence, were constantly foremost concerns. Literacy was linked to a host of vital concerns: national survival, agrarian reform, economic and political education, security and welfare (from protecting the dike system to responding to foreign attack). Basic literacy was followed by complementary education and formal education in a highly-planned but flexible set of delivery mechanisms. By the time that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was created in 1975, a fully functioning and integrated formal and complementary education system was in place and after the additional literacy campaign in the south, this system was extended there as well. Literacy was and remains a central planning priority in the education system at all levels, thus obviating the need to attempt to address standards and equivalencies which remain difficult issues in countries where non-governmental organizations, voluntary bodies and donors provide disparate literacy programmes for out-of-school youth and adults. (See Belloncle, 1982, Bhola, 1984, and Limage, 1975 and, for other campaigns and programmes, Lind and Johnston, 1990).

C. History of literacy and literacy policies in some industrialized countries

The first section of this paper addressed an historian’s perspective on the history of literacy in the western world as a whole. The second section looks at this history of literacy in Europe during the 18th, 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. This section returns to the special attention given to that history in certain industrialized countries over the past thirty years and how educationists and social commentators have looked to history to analyze the current state of both formal schooling and adult learning opportunities. The analysis here is not that there are any ‘new’ forms of ‘illiteracy’ with respect to basic reading, writing and numeracy. Neither is the argument that there is a need for new more complex understandings of the uses of literacy in specific contexts (which is of course, an ongoing process anyway). Rather, this section is devoted to two key points derived from the history of literacy: (a) that formal schooling never had as its primary function to fully convey basic reading, writing and numeracy skills and as a consequence, the existence of hundreds of thousands of young people who leave school in any industrialized country (France, Germany, the United States or United Kingdom, for example) with limited basic skills is not surprising and certainly not new; (b) adult literacy or adult basic education (both are used often interchangeably) remain persistent

and are recognized needs in these countries as they are in the rest of the world, although not necessarily prioritized in terms of adequate resources and programmes.

These two basic positions were first set out in doctoral research in 1975 that examined the origins of literacy, culture and education policies in four very different political and economic settings: (a) Brazil prior to the 1963 military coup and literacy before and after that date; (b) France in which equality of opportunity was and remains defined as identical treatment for all and literacy (*alphabétisme*) at that time was solely perceived as an issue of French as a second language for immigrant workers (prior to recognition in 1983 of basic skill needs among the French nationals with the creation of the GPLI and the invention of a highly-contentious term to describe those needs, *illettrisme*, (2)); (c) North Vietnam (the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and literacy in a specific Asian context and a society fighting a war of independence; (d) the United Kingdom in a context of the 1974 awareness-raising adult literacy campaign and re-examination of school-based literacy (Bullock Report. A Language for Life, 1975)

This section of the paper draws largely from “Illiteracy in Industrialised Countries: A Sociological Commentary” (Limage, 1981) and, “Adult Literacy Policy in Industrialized Countries” (Limage, 1986, 1987), in which attention is drawn to the fact that schools are under attack for a crisis of quality, effectiveness and arguably mythical declines in excellence. I go back to the history of education in several industrialized countries to look at the historical record to which Graff and other education historians have called attention as well as the extent and nature of adult basic skills/literacy policy and provision.

Jonathan Kozol in Illiterate America (1985) and Carmen St. John Hunter and David Harman in Illiteracy in the United States (1979) call attention to a ‘divided nation’ when referring to the widespread existence of youth and adults with limited or no basic reading and writing skills. Their analysis of the current situation (in the 1970s and 1980s) needs to be understood in the context of evidence provided by the historians who are the focus of the first section of this paper. Furet and Ozouf or Bourdieu and Passeron in France, Brian Simon in the United Kingdom and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis in the United States (for a small sample) consider that schools are fundamentally about social transmission and rather less concerned with producing fluent and independent readers and writers.

With respect to France, it has been well documented that, prior to the French Revolution, the school was the focus of political conflict between Church and monarchy. After the Revolution, the school became the battleground between Church and State, as the proponents of the Revolution attempted to unify a highly diverse country into a Republican nation. Reading and writing had no significant place in the existing schools, except for a minority of ecclesiastics and aristocrats. The major conflict, which in many ways persists to this day in France, is one of promoting a centralized republican state without interference from religious or political interests. (De Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 1975, Furet, 1978) Since the French Revolution, the lay teacher has been a sort of pioneer going out into a culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse country in order to convey a republican nationalism previously inexistent in opposition to the

religious interests that previously had control of people's minds. (Ozouf, M. 1984) This tension is present in current debates in 2005 about mutual respect and inequality in education. School failure is still seen to be the fault of the victim and school success involves (a) mastery of a unified French national culture; (b) mastery of the French language (not regional or minority languages); and (c) acquisition of legitimate knowledge conveyed by a national curriculum presented by teachers who are the neutral transmitters of that knowledge. (Baudelot and Estabiet, 1989, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1972, Koubi and Guglielmi, 2000, Limage, 2003).

Furet and Ozouf have shown for France, as was argued elsewhere in this papers, that the chronology and map of literacy is less related to the establishment of a school system than to the history of social development. In fact, schools, as they became open to wider social groups, severely restricted access to reading and writing. The appropriate form of learning in nineteenth century schools in France as elsewhere was rote memorization of biblical passages. The transition to include reading on the program was slow and selective. A clear division of labour occurred, first in schools and then in peasant homes. After *reading* in French was introduced for boys as well as girls in schools, access to *writing* was generally reserved for boys. Religious justification for such selection goes back centuries. Nevertheless, the culture and economy of the rural family reinforced this separation. Women tended to read in the home for family religious purposes, while men ceased to read and maintained their writing skills only in order to keep family accounts and records and, of course, to maintain contacts with the larger social worlds, (Furet and Ozouf, page 227).

A distinction also has to be made between the growth of literacy occurring outside schools in terms of rural and urban areas. Older urban centers responded more readily to the growth of literacy than newer ones because of their established populations of lawyers, merchants and artisans. Newer urban areas were characterized by many more peasants who had recently immigrated to these areas of rapid growth. Brian Simon's history of British education (Simon, 1974) has also shown that older urban centers were more receptive to literacy acquisition than newer ones. And historians in both countries employ document Kozol's 'divided nation' of the poor peasants and working classes on the one hand, and the wealthier classes, on the other. The former were highly mistrustful of the school as an institution designed to indoctrinate them to accept a certain social order. Comparable mistrust for public education in the 19th century United States is also documented by Bowles and Gintis for the farming states and a number of immigrant groups in urban areas (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

These and other historians emphasize, therefore, the distinction to be made between the gradual spread of literacy to communities ready to receive it and the growth of formal public schooling. Across a number of western nations, the pattern is more or less similar. First, the written word is the exclusive possession of an elite. It is then extended by rote memorization to a larger audience, frequently in a language other than the vernacular (first Latin, then French in France, while the majority of the population spoke a variety of dialects and regional languages). When a larger number of people eventually have access to reading and writing, power relationships are likely to change dramatically. Initially

only reading was taught in schools. That in itself may or may not allow for extensive control, since reading alone does not facilitate communication. Writing, however, was considered a potentially dangerous acquisition. The reticence surrounding access to writing is illustrated by the fact that it took three centuries for French schools to pass from the purely passive transmission of reading for memorization to include writing. A similar reticence is documented for the United Kingdom. Well, into the twentieth century, industrialized countries extended schooling only gradually and with great reluctance. This is not to say that there was no demand for knowledge among the most impoverished and working classes. Historians amply document initiatives by the working classes to gain independent knowledge. The Irish ‘hedge schools’ of the nineteenth century, in which instruction occurred on pain of punishment by the British, are one among many examples in a rich adult education history independent of officialdom. In other words, a more careful reading of the history of literacy and the separate histories of formal education do not lend themselves to simple analysis based on continuity and progress.

Further, adult literacy and basic skills needs among native speakers of the languages of virtually all countries of North America and Europe have been recognized for nearly thirty years. Many countries (Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States among others) created national level literacy agencies. In some countries, such as France, literacy needs for all age groups within schools and in the framework of lifelong learning were addressed across all relevant ministries officially in 1983. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the mandate began with attention to adults only in 1974 and has been transformed and extended. (3)

IV. History of literacy in Europe: synthesis

Historians of literacy in the early twentieth century, using primarily available census data show relative continuity in literacy levels from the mid-nineteenth century as discussed at greater length in the second section of this paper. While all countries progressed, their order remained unchanged (Johansson in Graff, 1987, Vincent, 2000). Central and Northern Europe were reported to have achieved over 95 percent literacy; Western Europe, over 80 percent; Austria and Hungary, over 70% (major growth); Spain, Italy and Poland, over 50 percent; and Portugal and orthodox Catholic countries, only around 25 percent. While countries were putting public education systems in place and some form of ‘modernizing’ development was occurring, the more disadvantaged countries were joining the mainstream of higher literacy levels. But, as discussed, there is no evidence that disparities in living, wealth, productive or inequality by region, age, sex, class or ethnic background were being seriously reduced.

According to Johansson and Graff, Southern and Eastern Europe was 80 percent literate by 1950 with the exception of Portugal, the Mediterranean islands and Albania (with a rate of about 50%). Although literacy levels were rising, no major social and economic change took place. Poor people and poor nations as well as poor regions within nations remained (and remain) poor. With respect to the United States, in relation to the rest of the western world, literacy levels increased steadily, from 80% in 1870 to 97.1 percent in

1940. By the 1960s, it was assumed that literacy was nearly universal except for those who could not learn due to physical disability. But an abundant and continuing historical (as well as educational) literature illustrates the intractable variations of inequality and disparity by region, ethnicity, sex, class and race. Historians of United States literacy identify the three major areas of inequality: white/black; native-immigrant, and North-South. So, in spite of expanding educational opportunity, there was (and is) no guarantee of equality of learning results, with respect to literacy in particular.

Studies concerning the United States also show that ‘illiteracy’ was higher among the unemployed or those not in the labor force, than among the employed; higher among farm and nonagricultural labourers than those in other occupations. The 1959 census places clerical, professional and technical workers as the most literate, followed by managers and proprietors, craftsmen and foremen, service workers, operatives, private household workers, farmers and farm managers, general laborers, and farm laborers and foremen. By and large in all occupations, women were more literate than men. The persistence of disparities between blacks and whites continued into the second half of the twentieth century. And as to be expected, illiteracy remained higher in rural farm populations than in rural non-farm or urban populations. Similar data for the 1960s and 1970s show the same persistent disparities. Historians have come to the same conclusions as other historians of education and other social scientists: although there has been increasing attention to improving educational provision (and presumably literacy), the same populations affected remain the lower classes, blacks, Hispanics and the aged. The same populations, who have suffered poverty and disadvantage in the past, continue to do so, in spite of increased literacy levels in the overall population.

Historians of literacy argue that there is no direct causal link between poverty and disadvantage and lack of literacy and numeracy skills in this context. Literacy is more a reflection of other social and economic factors. Literacy in and of itself does not provide the solution.

Place Table 6 about here

Johansson: Literacy in Europe, 1850-1970

At global level, the experience of industrialized countries is largely reinforced. There are major differences in literacy levels by region, country and disparities within countries by region, age, sex, class, rural/urban, etc. In 1960 and 1970, the ‘world literacy’ levels were estimated at 40 and 30 per cent respectively. Spectacular progress was made in countries where literacy provision was part of major political and economic transformations: (prior to 1960 by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and during the period by Vietnam, Cuba, China, Tanzania and Nicaragua. Africa and the Middle East made more limited progress, while Latin America and Asia had examples of major expansion of literacy in specific countries (albeit unevenly). The disparities and inequalities that are found in Europe and North America are magnified but similar. Gender inequality in access to literacy is the most visible, although girls’ educational performance outdistances boys’ across countries when *access is provided*. (4) Furthermore, Graff

(1987, page 378) argues “*developments in literacy and schooling tend to follow, rather than precede or cause, economic and social development*”.

(Place Table 7 about here)

Johansson: World Literacy in Historic Perspective)

It is beyond the scope of the present paper to examine the range of literacy and numeracy provision for adults and children and look at teaching and learning methods. However, there are important lessons to be learned from the history of teaching and learning literacy *in context*. The mass campaigns for universal literacy in the countries mentioned in the previous paragraph were often based on very traditional methods, rather than the political and social consciousness raising characteristic, for example of Paulo Freire-inspired literacy programmes. The contextualization in overall political and economic transformation and continuity with school-based opportunities may be the principal lesson to be learned from such an examination (See Lind and Johnston, 1990, Bhola, 1982). Such a review would take into account issues of scale, scope, timing, efficiency and resources as well as the recognition above all, that literacy provision--and any form of educational opportunity for that matter--are not neutral. And finally, according to what Graff calls, ‘*the literacy myth*’, education is supposed to stimulate economic development, lay the groundwork for democratic institutions and practice, provide opportunities for citizens to share values, language and unite. The direct causal evidence that this is the case is simply not there. In looking in a more interdisciplinary fashion at the actual conditions in which change takes place in specific contexts, we are more likely to discover how literacy acquisition at any given degree of competency actually makes a difference individually or collectively.

V. Human rights and literacy: Conclusion:

In the oft-quoted phrase of Johan Galtung,

“What would happen if the whole world became literate? Answer: not so very much, for the world is by and large structured in such a way that it is capable of absorbing the impact. But if the whole world consisted of literate, autonomous, critical, constructive people capable of translating ideas into action, individually, or collectively—the world would change”. (Galtung, 1975, re-printed in Graff, 1981 and 1987).

The concluding section of this paper refers to a fairly recent historic association, human rights and literacy. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains the first **international** normative instrument that makes education a fundamental human right. Yet, it does not mention literacy specifically. The discussion in this paper has also made very little reference to literacy or education as a ‘right’. Where literacy and formal schooling grew historically, it was readily framed as a need or an obligation at individual

or collective levels. As I have written elsewhere, ‘the right to literacy’ only becomes the focus of declarations, recommendations and action plans in very recent times. The mass literacy campaigns and programmes undertaken in countries undergoing major political, economic and social transformations like China, Cuba, the ex-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in the 20th century, all placed literacy acquisition in a nexus of inter-related rights and responsibilities. Other countries with more limited expectations from education, literacy in particular, do not dwell on these inter-relations although the elimination of all forms of discrimination and considerable legal, management, governance and pedagogical issues govern equal opportunity in education. (Limage, 1987)

In fact, the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights produced Article 26 in the context of their understanding of ‘the full development of the human personality’ (Morsink, 2004). The first paragraph of Article 26 contains five components of the right to an education: (1) the generic right to education itself, (2) that it shall be ‘free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages,’ (3) that ‘education shall be compulsory,’ (4) that ‘technical and professional education shall be made generally available,’ and (5) that ‘higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.’ Those engaged in drafting Article 26 were indeed concerned to ensure that education was accessible to all and that it should contribute by its moral quality to ensuring both individual and collective well-being. All of the authors had in mind the high-level of education available to German citizens that nonetheless led to two world wars. The spirit of this article is essentially contained in point 2, “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”

It seems that Galtung’s well-known comment is at the core of any conception of literacy that would give meaning to the right to education in the sense intended by the authors of the Universal Declaration, even if it is not explicitly mentioned. And yet, we are as far today from such a goal as we were some twenty years ago, even further in some regions of the world.

Notes:

(1) This section of the paper is based largely on material collected by the author from original North Vietnamese sources and the collections of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London prior to 1975 for doctoral research, as well as relevant social science literature available in French and English.

(2) For a recent history of the term, see Lahire, 1999 or earlier, Freynet, 1984.

(3) Interestingly, international cooperation on literacy industrialized countries got its first major impetus in 1980 when literacy specialists were gathered in Berlin for preparation of a study under UNESCO/International Council of Adult Education auspices on the history of literacy campaigns in the 20th century (later published as Bhola, 1982). Although the focus was on developing and socialist countries, the presence of comparative educationists and literacy specialists with industrialized country backgrounds in the field encouraged especially by the ICAE, led to a first international experts’ meeting in Eastbourne, United Kingdom a year later. And there is a considerable history of international cooperation that has

developed since that time, especially developed during International Literacy Year, 1990 by the United Nations International Literacy Year Secretariat, the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg and numerous national and international academic and professional initiatives.

(4) There is also considerable historic evidence and contemporary studies that show that women read more than men in both industrialized and developing countries.

(5) This idea may be compared to Condorcet's conception of the purpose of schooling in Revolutionary France but it actually conveys another aspiration in the international context of reaction to the horrors of World War II.

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Table 1: Graff: Key Points in the History of Literacy

Table 2 in separate file : Graff: Sources for history of literacy.

Table/Figure 3 (submitted in hard copy to be scanned)

Male illiteracy in Europe, 1800-1914

From David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy, Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*, Polity, Cambridge, 2000, page 9.

Table/Figure 4 (submitted in hard copy to be scanned)

Female illiteracy in Europe, 1800-1914

From David Vincent. *The Rise of Mass Literacy. Reading and Writing in Modern Europe*, Polity, Cambridge, 2000, page 10.

Table/Figure 5 (submitted in hard copy to be scanned)Growth in European school attendance and literacy rates

Table/Figure 6 (submitted in hard copy to be scanned)

Johansson: Literacy in Europe, 1870-1970

Table/Figure 7 (submitted in hard copy to be scanned)

**Johansson: World Literacy in Historical Perspective
Population 10-15 years of age and older**

Table 1 Key points in the History of Literacy in the West

From Harvey Graff, *The Labyrinths of Literacy*, The Falmer Press, London, 1987, page 29.

Ca. 3100 B.C.	Invention of writing
Ca. 3100-1500 B.C.	Development of writing systems
Ca. 650-550 B.C.	'Invention' of Greek alphabet
Ca. 500-400 B.C.	First school developments, Greek city-states, tradition of literacy for civic purposes
Ca. 200 B.C.-A.D. 200	Roman public schools
0 +	Origins and development of Christianity
800-900	Carolingian language, writing and bureaucratic developments
1200 +	Commercial, urban 'revolutions', expanded administration and other uses of literacy and especially writing, development of lay education, rise of vernaculars, practical literacy, Protestant heresies
1300 +	Rediscovery of classical legacies
1450s	Advent of printing, consolidation of states, Christian humanism
1500s	Reformation, spread of printing, growth of vernacular literatures, expanded schooling (mass literacy in radical Protestant areas)
1600s	Swedish literacy campaigns
1700s	Enlightenment and its consolidation of traditions, 'liberal' legacies
1800s	School developments, institutionalization, mass literacy, 'mass' print media, education for social and economic development: public and compulsory
1900s	Non-print, electronic media
late 1900s	Crisis of literacy...and other things

Table 2: Sources for the Historical Study of Literacy in North American and Europe
 (From Harvey Graff, The Labyrinths of Literacy, The Falmer Press, London, 1987, pages 20-22)

Source	Measure of literacy	Population	Country of availability	Years of availability	Additional variables
Census	Questions: read and Write, read/write Signature/mark (Canada 1851, 1861 only)	Entire 'adult' population (in theory): ages variable, e.g. over 20 years, 15 years, 10 years	Canada, USA	Manuscripts: 19th cen.	Age, sex, occupation, birthplace, religion, marital status, family size and structure, residence, economic data
Wills	Signature/mark	20-50% of adult Males dying; 2-5% of adult females dying	Canada, United States England, France, etc.	Canada, eighteenth century on. US 1660 on, others from sixteenth-seventeenth century on	Occupation, charity, family size, residence, estate, sex
Deeds	Signature/mark	5-85% of living Landowning adult Males; 1% or less of females	Canada, United States	Eighteenth century on	Occupation, residence, value of land, type of sale
Inventories	Book ownership	25-60% of adult Males dying; 3-10% of adult females dying	Canada, United States, England, France, etc.	Seventeenth-eighteenth century on (quantity varies by country and date)	Same as wills
Depositions	Signature/mark	Uncertain: Potentially more Select than wills, Potentially wider. Women sometimes	Canada, United States, England Europe	Seventeenth-eighteenth century on (use and survival varies)	Potentially, age, occupation, sex, birthplace, residence

(From Harvey Graff, The Labyrinths of Literacy, The Falmer Press, London, 1987, pages 20-22).

Source	Measure of literacy	Population	Country of availability	Years of availability	Additional variables
Marriage Records	Signature/mark	Nearly all (80%+) young men and women marrying (in England)	England, France North America	From 1754 in England; 1650 in France	Occupation, age, sex, parents' name and occupation, residence, religion --North America)
Catechetical Examination Records	Reading, memorization, comprehension, writing examinations	Unclear, but seems very wide	Sweden, Finland	After 1620	Occupation, age, tax status, residence, parents' name and migration, periodic migration, periodic improvement
Petitions	Signature/mark	Uncertain, potentially very select, males only in most cases	Canada, United States, England Europe	Eighteenth century on	Occupation, or status, sex, residence, political or social views
Military Recruit records	Signature/mark or question on reading and writing	Conscripts or recruits (males only)	Europe, esp. France	Nineteenth century	Occupation, health, age, residence, education
Criminal records	Questions: read, read well, etc.	All arrested	Canada, United States, England	Nineteenth century	Occupation, age, sex, religion, birthplace, residence, marital status, moral habits, criminal data

Table 2: Sources for the Historical Study of Literacy in North America and Europe (continued)

(From: Harvey Graff, The Labyrinths of Literacy, The Falmer Press, London, 1987, pages 20-22.)

Sources	Measure of literacy	Population	Country of availability	Years of availability	Additional variables
Business	Signature/mark	1) All employees 2) Customers	Canada, United States, England, Europe	Nineteenth-twentieth century	1) Occupation, wages 2) Consumption level, residence, credit
Library/ Mechanics	Books borrowed	Members or borrowers	Canada, United States, England	Late eighteenth early nineteenth Century	Names of volumes borrowed, society membership
Applications Land, job, Pensions, Etc.	Signature/mark	All applicants	Canada, United States, England, Europe	Nineteenth-twentieth	Occupation, residence, family career history, etc.
Aggregate (1) Data sources	Questions or direct tests	Varies greatly	Canada, United States, England	Nineteenth-twentieth century	Any or all of the above

Note: 1 Censuses, educational surveys, statistical society reports, social surveys, government commissions, prison and jail records, etc.

Sources: Graff, Harvey, The Literacy Myth, Appendix A, pp. 325-27. This is a modified and greatly expanded version of Table A in Lockridge, Literacy.