Contents

Editor's preface		xi
Acknowledgments		xv
1	Approaching literacy	1
	Introduction	1
	Dimensions of literacy and illiteracy	11
2	Defining and measuring literacy and illiteracy	22
	Defining literacy	22
	Functional literacy: a brief history	25
	Operationalising functional literacy	36
	A sociological conception of literacy	42
3	The historical perspective	47
	Introduction	47
	Literacy in classical Greece and Rome	47
	Medieval manuscript literacy in Britain	55
	The advent of print	69
	Literacy in early modern Britain	73
	The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries	82
4	Tutors and students	94
	Introduction	94
	Illiteracy myths	95
	The Nottingham Adult Literacy Scheme	98
	Recruitment and matching procedures	102
	Tutor training	104
	The Nottingham literacy catchment area	106
	Illiteracy careers	109
	Initial contacts	112
	Tuition and orientations to illiteracy	115
	Progress and dropping out	121
	Summary	123

5 Illiteracy and work 125
Introduction 125
The Nottingham labour market 125
Work histories 128
Employers and illiteracy 135
Explaining literacy screening policies 146

6 Dealing with illiteracy 150
Introduction 150
The British Adult Literacy Campaign 150
The political economy of illiteracy 155
The scale of illiteracy: misreading the problem 164
Responding to social disadvantage 171
Remedying illiteracy 178

7 The future of literacy and literacies of the future 183
Introduction 183
The oral-literate transition 185
Literacy and the information explosion 191

Appendix 1 Details of sampling and interviewing procedures 208
Appendix 2 English historical literacy rates 211
Notes 217
Bibliography 228
Index 249