



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

The Tube

By the year 2020, according to Harvard journalism Professor Vincent Marshburger, very few people will read newspapers, even fewer will read books, and no one will read magazines.

The reason? Television will replace them all.

Way back in 1938, essayist E. B. White proclaimed: "We shall stand or fall by television — of that I am quite sure."

Television — with its enormous potential when linked to a central computer bank — will provide all the services now performed by magazines, books, newspapers, service manuals, recipes, instruction leaflets and even scripture.

According to Marshburger, no amount of gimmickery (by that I assume he means such things as

editors printing columns upside down) will entice people back to ordinary reading once television takes control.

Video discs may be on the market by this Christmas. These are inexpensive long-playing records which play on a small machine attached to your present TV set. They produce images as well as sound. MCA Inc., the biggest producer of Disco-Vision, says there are 500,000 customers waiting for such productions of opera alone.

By the end of the century, according to Marshburger, soaring postal rates will have wiped out all magazines and most newspapers. News and features, sports and editorials, will all come into your home via the tube — some by computer print-out.

And, of course, the age of the electronic church is already upon

us. Ministers who fight it, rather than use it, will be left behind.

And why read the classics when you can get them by punching a sequence of buttons on your computer-TV?

Tragic? Not necessarily so. Reading is a relatively new science, anyway. At least for most people. Prior to the invention of the printing press, very few read. Until then, reading skills were limited to a few clergy, scholars, and scribes who faithfully copied books and documents by hand.

So, times are changing. Shakespeare's plays, designed for drama, not reading, will be captured for the tube. Punch a button and pick up the news, the batting average, or a scripture reference. It's an exciting age. Only old wineskins will rebel.