last updated (some websites can sit untended for years). At the foot of the contents page of the *World Database of Happiness*, which I accessed in January 2004, it said it had been updated on October 4, 2003. In any case, the links to the journal websites brought me right up to date.

Summary

This PROMPT checklist is an excellent aid when you find information on the web. Not all of the six criteria are equally important in every case but using the checklist will help you to develop your ability to evaluate what you find.

> ### *Key points*
>
> ■ You need to be able to distinguish 'good' information from 'bad'.
>
> ■ Practise using criteria such as those in the PROMPT checklist to evaluate the information you find.

9.4 Misuse of online information

Having stressed the immense benefits of the internet as a source of information, it is important to sound a note of caution.

9.4.1 The myth of infinite access to knowledge

See Chapter 4, Understanding how you learn

Access to the internet will not turn you into a wise and knowledgeable person. A mountain of information does not amount to 'knowledge'. A telephone book is packed with information, but you will learn little from reading it. Information is of value only if it is put into context. It is the *understanding* within which information is framed which constitutes knowledge; and understanding takes time and thought. It is not produced by a series of quick 'hits' on relevant websites.

Websites which are carefully structured and lead you through a well organised sequence of ideas will help you to acquire knowledge. You can also develop your knowledge by undertaking searches provided that you start out with a well-formed idea of what it is you are looking for. The internet is invaluable when your thoughts have reached a point where you need more information, but meandering across cyberspace at the whim of a search engine will leave your knowledge untouched.

9.4.2 Substituting a search engine for your brain

It is easy to produce dreadful assignments by using a search engine to do a quick, undiscriminating trawl. Searching for a few words from your assignment task, copying results from websites you come across, then