

# Notice

**Help! I've Inherited an Attic Full of History Volume I: Dating, evaluating and disposing of the accumulation of a lifetime. Volume II: Archival conservation in the home environment.** ALTHEA DOUGLAS. Toronto: Ontario Genealogical Society, 1998. Vol. I, 92 p. ISBN 0-7779-0203-6; Vol. II, 94 p. ISBN 0-7779-217-6.

Althea Douglas, a certified genealogist, has produced a simple, sensible guide to the difficult tasks of evaluation, disposal, and conservation in the home or club environment. Written for non-archivists, the guide is intended to provide the necessary information for a layperson to make decisions about the records most likely to be found in a home or club environment, or when disposing of an estate. In a clear and logical fashion, it leads the reader through preservation, disposal, accessioning, and conservation of these records.

The guide is written in two parts. In Volume I, Douglas outlines the basic questions necessary to complete an assessment of records to determine if they should be preserved or discarded. How does one decide their value? Are there any personal reasons to retain the records (likely for genealogical or historical value)? She then provides some general principles for determining possible monetary value, categorizes some items, and goes on to discuss in more detail the concepts of provenance, condition, collectibles, and other qualities that establish value. All of the examples she gives are clear and typical, and her instructions on creating accession lists are useful. Volume II deals with the handling, preservation, and conservation of the items to be retained.

Douglas's advice is useful and easy to follow, arranged in such a way that it emphasizes both the need for safety and how to handle items without causing damage. This advice is essential to the layperson and is prominent throughout both volumes.

Each volume contains a bibliography arranged by material, a useful method for those readers wishing to conduct further research. Volume I contains a

twenty-three-page glossary with detailed explanations of terms. Both the bibliography and glossary are, again, essential to laypersons.

For non-archivists, this guide is useful, comprehensive, and easy to follow. Estate executors as well as others without archival training who find themselves dealing with artifacts and records, either personal or from a club or institution, would find it extremely helpful. As an introduction to the processes involved in gaining physical control of material, it is excellent.

**Candice Vetter**

Association of Canadian Archivists