

Views Vary On Variations

Several months ago I conducted an e-mail survey of collectors pertaining to just what constituted valid variations in matchcovers which were otherwise identical. 91 people responded. Now, I recognize and collect covers as distinctly different based on various variations, myself, but the results of this survey were surprising to me in several areas, none-the-less.

1. **Text size/font is different:** 91.2% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 6.5% said 'no'. 2.3% were undecided or did not respond to the question.
2. **Footers are different:** 89% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 10.9% said 'no'. .1% were undecided or did not respond to the question.
3. **Manumarks are different:** 85.7% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 14.3% said 'no'.
4. **Cover lengths are different:** 84.6% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 14.2% said 'no'. 1.2% were undecided or did not respond to the question. This is basically the older, pre-vending machine XL or 'Tall' covers compared to the later, shorter covers.
5. **Stock color is different:** 59.3% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 32% said 'no'. 9.7% were undecided or did not respond to the question.
6. **Striker colors are different:** 56% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 37.3% said 'no'. 6.7% were undecided or did not respond to the question.
7. **Striker widths are different:** 50.5% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 41.7% said 'no'. 7.9% were undecided or did not respond to the question.
8. **Color shades are different:** 40.6% said 'yes', this is a valid variation. 49.4% said 'no'. 10% were undecided or did not respond to the question.

Not surprisingly, I suppose, as the split in votes becomes more pronounced, more collectors are generally undecided.

Several points were noted by those responding:

- Variations count, but not all collectors count variations in their official collection counts.*
- A number of people pointed out that variations almost always depend on degree. I.e., is the difference significant or minor? Obvious or obscure? And that, of course, is open to opinion, as well.*
- Full-book collectors might count different-colored matchheads as a variation, although I hadn't thought about that one (there wouldn't have been enough full-book respondents anyway).*
- I also didn't include a question referring to text spacing, but at least a few collectors brought up that possibility as a variation.*
- Some collectors pointed out the manufacturer's hole in the manumark area as another variation; I could kick myself for missing that one in the survey! But, I'm assuming that most collectors would not count that as a valid variation.*
- Different colored top tips? I would think that was a cutting variation rather than a cover variation.*