



Editorial

The Continuing Shift In The Hobby: II Oodles and Oodles!

Recently, I happened to be looking at a prior RMS *Insta-Poll* (July 2007). In it, 95 collectors reported on the size of their collections, which ranged from 1 million to 245...Quite a spread! Given last issue's discussion in Part I of this editorial, a thought struck me [*Yes! Another one!*] Yes, there aren't as many new covers being manufactured here; and, yes, it's harder to come by them....but think of all the covers already safely preserved, stored, and waiting...just for you...by other collectors.

Well, that's what got me started. So, just out of curiosity, I added up all of those reported collection sizes from those 95 collectors...and it added up to a whopping 6,356,895 covers! And, consider that that's only 95 out of the some 900 known active collectors I currently have in my data base. So, perhaps we can guess that there are some 10x that in the entire hobby...which would work out to 63,568,950 covers!

And, consider that we haven't even figured in trading stock yet! *Oh, my!* Last issue's *Insta-Poll* saw 74 collectors reporting a total of 1,578,350 covers in trading stock/'extra' covers. Hmmmm...multiply that by the remaining percentage of those 900 collectors, and we get another....14,140,200 covers for a grand total of 15,718,550 covers in dupes and trading stock.

So...at an educated guess, there are some *79 million* covers in collectors' hands...already stripped, already pressed, already organized. If worse came to worse, we don't even *need* the match industry anymore! The point is, then, that, irrespective of who's manufacturing how many covers these days, there are an *awful* lot of covers already in the hobby (and untold *more* tens of millions yet to be discovered in the hands of non-collectors—perhaps even *hundreds* of millions). Thus, it's incorrect to moan and groan about 'covers not being available anymore'. The truth is that they certainly *are* available; they're just not as easy to get as they once were.

And, all those covers in the hobby are *regularly* circulating from collector to collector—round and round—Collections being sold, covers being traded, auctions, raffles, drawings, freebie tables, prizes. Picture all those covers on a gigantic moving carrousel, with collectors constantly taking covers off and putting others on...a veritable endless smorgasbord of covers! Come on! What more could you ask for! [*now don't be greedy!*]

Additionally, with some 16 million covers already in the hobby as trading stock/extra covers, it would seem that that would be an additional impetus for more trading between collectors. *They're* the ones who have all those covers! Yes, I know that the Fates seem to be working against us die-hard traders....Postal rates have gone up yet again; mail deliveries may be curtailed on Saturdays or Tuesdays; and so on. But, a collector goes where the covers are. We're lucky to be in a hobby where trading ...and freebies...exist at all! You don't see that in most of the other collectible hobbies.

So, if you're feeling down and out about the future of your collecting, or if you're just a novice wondering how you're going to build any collections in the first place...*it's a piece of cake!*