

**RMS INSTA-POLL**

"What's your best estimate of how many covers you currently have in your trading and or dupe stock (not your collections)?  
- March 2009; 74 responding

- 100 -2
- 200 -1
- 250 -1
- 350 -1
- 500 -1
- 650 -1
- 700 -1
- 800 -2
- 1,000 -5
- 1,500 -4
- 2,000 -6
- 2,500 -3
- 3,000 -4
- 3,500 -1
- 4,000 -4
- 5,000 -5
- 5,500 -1
- 7,000 -2
- 10,000 -8
- 12,000 -1
- 15,000 -4
- 18,000 -1
- 20,000 -3
- 30,000 -3
- 35,000 -2
- 50,000 -2
- 70,000 -1
- 75,000 -1
- 100,000 -1
- 150,000 -1
- 200,000 -1

Well, that's quite a spread, all the way from 100 to 200,000! From the comments of several participants, though, I think the smaller numbers may somewhat misleading in that they stated that they make a conscious effort to get rid of dupes and unneeded covers as soon as they can, either by trading or simply donating them away to various clubs, freebie tables, etc. On the other hand, the poll question posed *did* specify numbers *currently* on hand, so...

The reported numbers here add up to 1,036,950 covers and only 74 collectors responded for this poll. That's 74 out of the 921 currently known collectors in the hobby, and every collector has at least some extra covers, so...there must be, at a minimum, at least a few more million such covers out there. If this poll's showing is anywhere near an accurate picture of the whole, then there must be close to 12,858,180 covers that are currently being held in the hobby as dupes/trading/unwanted stock.

Now, while it's true that covers are always coming *into* the hobby and *out* of the hobby, I believe the number of covers coming into the hobby (from outside the hobby) vastly outnumber those leaving the hobby. For example, covers sold by collectors on ebay may well end up in the hands of non-collectors, such as a selection of Railroad covers going to a Railroad paraphernalia enthusiast, but those are almost always single covers or small groups. On the other hand, similar quantities are coming *into* the hobby as collectors purchase similar lots on ebay from non-collectors... while much, much larger accumulations from the outside find their way into the hobby every day....1,500 covers here, 30,000 covers there, and so on.

There may also be an occasional blip here and there in this process, such as when an entire collection is lost in a fire or some such, but that's pretty rare. And on the other side, of course, new covers are still being manufactured, and they continue to come into the hobby all the time—For the last 15 years, for example, just think of all the new Tobacco and Casino covers that have appeared.

Overall, then, the future outlook, as far as sheer numbers of covers available to the collector, both as needed covers and as dupe/trading/donation stock looks very rosy, indeed, I would think. Unfortunately, comparative numbers from earlier times in the hobby is unavailable, but I would also conclude that the today's average collection size and the average amount of 'extras' on hand are significantly larger than what they were in earlier times. I know *my* collections certainly continue to grow (but that would be expected of any collection, because that is what a collector *does*), but my 'extra' covers far exceed what I would ever have dreamed of before.

Fueling this 'trend' is the additional fact that there are fewer collectors collecting now, so I have to wonder that even if there were *no* new covers coming into the hobby at all from outside sources, if numbers *inside* the hobby wouldn't still continue to grow as more covers are continually being recycled into fewer hands. So, what does all this really mean?

....A rosy future for collectors!