

Lexicon of Jazz Invective

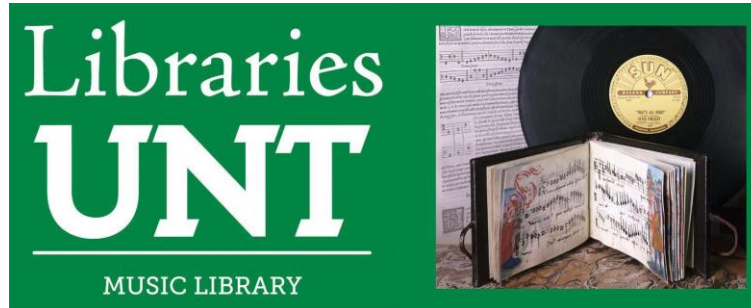
Hurling insults across a century with Big Data

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Texas Chapter of the Music Library Association

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Overview

- Reception history
- Same old examples repeatedly cited; seeking context
- Adding depth to “standard narrative of jazz history”
- Made possible by mass digitization, open access

In the spirit of Slonimsky

- A “*Schimpflexicon*”: “a collection of diatribes, insults, epithets, etc. against an individual or party”
- “To demonstrate that music is an art in progress, and that objections leveled at every musical innovator are all derived from the same psychological inhibition... Non-Acceptance of the Unfamiliar” (p. 3).

Scope and terminology

- Resources: NY Times, Google, Chronicling America, Newspapers.com (free trial)
- “Jazz,” “jass”
- Years: 1916-1922
- Lower boundary: Usage statistics within resources

Upper boundary: Copyright



Expected findings

- Puritanical and/or racist diatribes against jazz
- Targeted critiques of artists and bands
- Household names

Actual findings, Part I

- Massive blind spot to African-American music and musicians in print media
- Buddy Bolden? Louis Armstrong? Bunk Johnson? Freddie Keppard? Jelly Roll Morton? Jimmie Noone? Pops Foster? No.
- Absence of mention of Storyville
- Very few familiar names: Sophie Tucker, Fannie Brice, Ted Lewis

Actual findings, Part II

- Absence of emphasis on soloists
- Due in part to lack of representation, but names of jazz bands mentioned much more frequently than individuals
- Matches standard narrative of Joe Oliver's impact on soloists

Actual findings, Part III

- Vituperations against jazz as a genre and how people danced to it
- Garden-variety racism with a side of pseudoscience
- Creative blame: Bolsheviks? Incas? Gypsies?
- Rumors of demise – it's just a phase

Quotations

“Jazz music is the delirium tremens of syncopation...” Walter Kingsley, quoted in *Cayton's*, 9/17/1917

"That crown prince of ugliness." - Robert J. Cole, *New York Times*, 9/21/1919

Quotations II

"Jazz is an abominable thing ... It makes people trot like foxes, limp like lame ducks and one-step like cripples, all to the barbaric yawp of strange instruments which transform the modern ballroom into a weird moving picture of a fancy dress ball in the famous madhouse of Bedlam. No wonder our young girls shock us with the immodesty of their dress and with their brazen 'petting parties'! What can we expect when they are continually under the influence of the music of savagery?" - Professor S. T. Martin of Michigan.

"It was thought to have been one of Africa's gifts to civilization along with the tsetse fly, the race problem and other things equally unwelcome."

Both from the *New York Tribune*, May 8, 1921

Quotations III

"Jazz has worked its way into the life of our city and given its inhabitants a misconception of the purpose of life and the sanctity of marriage vows," declared Judge Alexander Brough, of the Probation court of New York, in a recent interview. "It has put in the populace a nervous desire always to be doing something in a hurry. That's why hundreds of couples marry in haste and repent the rest of their lives."- *Tulsa Morning Daily World*, 12/3/1922

Quotations IV

"Jazz is retrogression. It is going to the African jungle for our music ... Its effect is to make you clatter, and, as Voltaire said, 'to go on all fours,' to which I would add - and whisk your tail around a tree."

"Dancing in itself is a substitute for sex contact."

"If jazz is our national anthem, then the Devil's crying argument 'Go to Hell' is our national slogan."

Rev. Dr. Percy Stickney Grant, quoted in the *New York Times*, January 30, 1922

SAYS MUSIC'S CHARMS WOULD SOOTHE UNREST

Boguslawski Contends Steel Strikers' Souls Had Been Jarred by the Jangle of Jazz.

Special to The New York Times.

DETROIT, Dec. 14.—Music is Moses Boguslawski's remedy for social and industrial unrest.

"If there had been good music in the coal mining communities there would have been no strike," said the Russian pianist. "The Government took their whisky away from them, and gave them nothing to take its place.

"Given a Chopin mazurka, a Beethoven sonata, or a masterpiece of emotionalism by Debussy, the coal miners would have hesitated about turning the country cold; they might not have struck at all.

"It is a mistake to say that jazz is what the American public wants. It is what the poorer people accept because it is cheap. The worker buys a cheap popular ditty to put on his record, or play upon his piano, because it costs only 10 or 25 cents. A fine symphony, or selection from an opera would cost him several dollars and he can't afford it.

"Neither can he afford to go to the opera, or to the concert hall, and hear the great musicians, so he stays home and listens to 'I'll Say She Does,' or attends the cabaret, to be assaulted by a jangle and crash of mistreated musical instruments. Workers in steel mills, coal mines, factories, listen all day to discordant sounds pounding the soul out of them.

"Their bodies are weary, the nerves shattered, and in the wet days they rushed to the whisky bottle for relief. What they needed then, and need more now, that liquor has gone, is the soothing influence of fine music. There is one thing the American has not learned about the foreigner, and that is his musical tastes."

"Jazz Stunts Are Shattering Our American Nerves"

So Prof. Dykema Declares as He Deplores the Rhythmic Attack on Morals and Health, and Likens the Trap-Drummer to a Voodoo Worshipper.



A Night Show at Starlight (Incorporated Prof., New York City, Where the "Night Show" Are Held) Shows, and the Dancers' Party Back to Table.

The rhythmic music of jazz, according to Prof. Dykema, is not only a rhythmic attack on the nerves, but it is also a rhythmic attack on the morals. He declares that the rhythmic music is a rhythmic attack on the morals, and that it is a rhythmic attack on the health. He likens the trap-drummer to a voodoo worshipper, and he declares that the rhythmic music is a rhythmic attack on the nerves, and that it is a rhythmic attack on the health.



Seen at Professional Pianist Night (Held at the Starlight Show) at the Grand Hotel, New York, City, is the Pianist, Mrs. M. J. Fisher. (Photo, Starlight Show, N. Y. City.)



The Biggest Victim in the World—17 Foot 7 Inches Tall, a Prof. 7 Inches Wide, 17 Inches Long, 120 Pounds Weight, Average the Thickness of a Sheet of Paper and 7 Feet 10 Inches Long; Height 12 Inches High, and a Fine 22 Inches. (Photo, Starlight Show, N. Y. City.)



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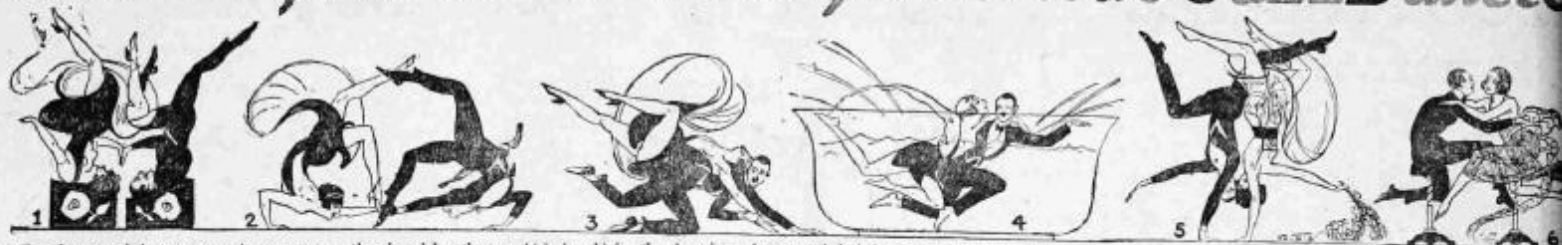
BLAME GYPSIES FOR JAZZ

**Music and Dance Originated With
Romany Tribe in Southern Part
of Europe.**

Akron, O.—Most folks thought the jazz bands and the jazz music came from somewhere around New Orleans and that New York finished the job by introducing the jazz dance. But Dr. Oscar Junek, educator of this city, says the music and dance come from the Isigane Gypsies, who roam the southern part of Europe.

Doctor Junek was born in Silesia, Austria, and says he often saw the Gypsies stop to do the jazz dance. He thinks some American dancing master must have visited that country, too.

Even Gay Paris Shocked by America's Jazz Dances



A French cartoonist's very sarcastic comment on the absurd lengths to which he thinks the Americans have carried their acrobatic dances. The pictures show the artist's conception of (1), the Jugglers' Jazz; (2), the Upside-Down Camel Walk; (3) the Back-to-Back Trot; (4), the Marine Glide; (5), the Tippy-Topsy Toddle; and (6), the Lunch Counter Whirl.

Leaders of French Thought Denounce Our Syncopated Melodies and the Steps That Keep Time with

Their Blare As "Ugly, Ridiculous and Indecent," but the Public Refuses To Be Shocked and Just Can't Find Anything Too Jazzy

THAT Paris is a gay and wicked city is one of the fixed ideas we Americans from youth collect and cling to. The very name of France's capital suggests a high old time. We are in the habit of announcing a forthcoming visit to Paris with a wink and a devilish expression, and our friends all tell us to be good, and if we can't be good to be careful.

Paris to us is the place where the blue laws *meuse* from troubling. It is the merry city where the lid is not only off, but is lost. There, it is the American notion, the writers of naughty French farces get a profusion of plots from real life.

Paris, where life sparkles like champagne! Paris, where you can get champagne! Our prohibition law has given that city just so much more of a reputation for joviality.

We expect extremes in dress, dancing and so forth from Paris. And from Paris and things Parisian we look for our best supply of shocks, startlers and causes for gasps.

And now Paris has turned around and got horribly shocked at us! It's such an amusing, topsy-turvy state of affairs as we never could have imagined.



The Apache dance, a Parisian invention which gave the rest of the world a severe shock, but which the French capital has never thought anything worthy of worry about.

Busted Hearts Lie In Jazz's Trail; Syncopation Irks U. S.

BY MARGARET ROHE

NEW YORK, June 17.—In this nation syncopation simply is our meat. Most of the people that I know would rather jazz than eat. I will even go still farther, stating what I think—lots of folks share preferential treatment dance than drink. How they jiggle, writhle and wiggle while the saxophone makes them quiver, shudder, shiver to its pulsative moan.

Here a flapper with a dapper college youth will sway. There an actress and a broker jazz the hours away. Tired it is, with dancing to let, or a wife perform not his own but some one else's yam suspect, of course.

All find pleasure in each measure of the ragged tune. Hark, the cymbals crash and tinkle while the fiddle boom. Father, mother, sister, brother, auntie, husband, wife, uncle, cousin, even granddad (think this is the life).

Yet it seems this jazz obtained, frivolous and free is a message to our morals. We should let it be. Hartley Mansers preached its dangers in a play last fall. Showed that almost every evil's due to jazz, that's all.

Now an awful thing has happened. If you don't watch out, you will get diarrhoea from jazz about. There's a show girl who has got it out Chicago way. Got it learning jazz contortions for a summer play. Manager and show promoter she is suing now. When she's finished with the fellow she expects ten tons.



"YOU MADE ME WHAT I AM TODAY—NOW YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY."

Zealous girl, she was so earnest to acquire the jazz, she worked overtime gyrating, shimmying and has, as result acquired a virgile permanent and rare. She just shivers like an insect.



WHO WILL WIN—THE JAZZ OR GIPSY, IT IS HARD TO TELL.

Doesn't know the cure. When she hears a sax moaning she just has a spell. Amazeb caused by notes of music, sickness soon will quell.

Busted hearts and limbs and lambs' rolls lie in jazz's trail. Now then international troubles are the latest wail. But enough if we had only kept our jazz at home, but it simply up and started far away to roam. Led by negro jazz musicians 'round the world it rove. Berlin, Paris, London, Shanghai, all are jazzing too.

But in Budapest the jazzbo attack an awful snag. Hungary and pipey fiddlers simply won't stand rat. Negro bands with jazzy music have the gipsy curage. And in awful zippy language curses sound much worse.

Gipsies long have furnished music for all Budapest. Now they won't stand jazz invasions and they'll do their best to drive out the negro jazz era. They will beat the band with their stithers and singaris, anythar at hand.

Who will win, the jazz or gipsy, it is hard to tell. Budapesters all agree, though, music war is—what Sherman said.

When you think of all the evils caused by jazz, oh dear, what you could do in papers, also what you hear, don't you think 'would be a wjaer, don't you think 'would be a wjaer and enter bet, if we changed our nanchy jazzing for the minant?

Jazz Must Go

Listen to the gibberish of jazz:

"Do you park?" asked the youth, and he laid his cheek firmly against hers as they toddled. She was a snappy dame, who rolled her own and shimmied a mean eyelash. He was a hair-netter, a necker, the hero of many a petting party, and he could sling a mean line—no ham would be the wife for him.

What does it all mean? It is the slang of ultra-modern youth—the accompaniment of indecency in dress, in talk, in behavior.

We have given our young folks freedom; we are seeing it fail as they dance hellward by the jazz route. Now it is time to wake up—to get **Back to Pre-War Morals.**

In the November issue of **THE HOME JOURNAL** is the first of a series of articles for mothers and fathers who are concerned about the future of their sons and daughters.

Are you?

JAZZ DOOMED IN BRITAIN.

Imperial Society of Dancing Teachers Promises New Dances.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, July 23.—The passing of jazz is foreshadowed by the Secretary of the somewhat grandiloquently styled Imperial Society of Dancing Teachers.

The society is holding an annual congress next week and some newly invented dances are to be exhibited which will "supersede jazz, the foxtrot, and all other" dances.

The New York Times

Published: July 25, 1919

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TO SUPPRESS 'JAZZ' DANCES.

**Pittsburgh Dance Hall Proprietors
Will Probably Ask a City Ordinance.**

PITTSBURGH, Feb. 3.—An organization of dancing academy owners for suppression of improper dances in Pittsburgh is being formed, according to F. J. Foreman, a dance hall proprietor, who announced today that the new body, when formed, would probably ask the City Council to adopt an ordinance regulating dancing.

Such dances as "the shimmy," the "cheek and jowl shuffle," and other "jazz" dances will be forbidden, said Mr. Foreman. He added that the owners of dance halls would operate a "blacklist" under which no couple who offended in one academy would be permitted to appear on the floor of another hall.

JAZZ IS DANCED WITH FEET; THE SHIMMY BY--ER--

Atlantic City, N. J., June 11.—[Special.]—Strict censorship of dancing is asked by the International Association of Dancing Masters. Dancing is an ultra-refined art and is being dreadfully mutilated. The shimmy and other vulgar creations must be wiped out. Polloewomen are the solution.

Such are the declarations at the annual convention of the professors today. Delegates, distressed that the shimmy and the jazz are regarded as one and the same, say the shimmy is an outrage, but the jazz is artistic and danced with a foot movement.

New York state is regarded as hopeless on any reform.

JAZZ IN SCIENTIFIC WORLD

Prof. Charles Lane Poor of Columbia Explains Prof. Einstein's Astronomical Theories.

WHEN is space curved?
When do parallel lines meet?
When is a circle not a circle?
When are the three angles of a triangle not equal to two right angles?

Why, when Bolshevism enters the world of science, of course!

It is thus that Charles Lane Poor, Professor of Celestial Mechanics at Columbia University, explains the extraordinary cable announcements from London about Professor Albert Einstein's theories, which some suppose to have been verified by observations of the recent total eclipse of the sun. These observations

have been made on May 29 last and a case in point. If these observations are as reported (and such seems unquestionably to be the case), then these explanations, under present accepted theories, may be difficult, but such observations certainly do not warrant the acceptance of the speculations of Einstein.

"It may be that history is merely repeating itself. When Newton's theory of universal gravitation was given to the world in 1685 it was received with incredulity, especially among scientists on the Continent of Europe. Observations were adduced which these scientists asserted proved the fallacy of the Newtonian laws. One by one these observations were shown to be in harmony with the law, to be direct consequences of it.

"Nearly one hundred years later

CHINESE JAZZ 1200 YEARS OLD

IT is all off, that stuff about Broadway being the origin of Jazz bands and Jazz music. The terrible truth is out at last and backed up by historical methods to prove that Jazz is originally Chinese and that it was practiced somewhere in the Celestial domains only a little matter of about 1200 years ago—a long time before many of New York's pretenders to the doubtful honor of having discovered Jazz was born. Every so often some vaudevillian makes claim to having introduced Jazz music. Now, here is the truth: Four Chinese images have been dug up out of the grave of a Chinese empress who died somewhere about 600 A.D., and each of these images is a likeness of some Jazz band player. The images are in the hands of M. Parish-Watson, a Britisher sojourning at 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, and are described as follows: "The girl to the left has a flute. Next to her is a reed instrument performer whose modern counterpart is a saxophonist. It takes no stretch of imagination to tell where the ukelele comes from by a glance at the third figure in the row of images. The last figure in the plaque is a girl whose duty is the noise maker of the band. She is there with cymbals." The images were made by an imperial potter for a former empress of China and were buried with her in the tomb to furnish music for her spirit.

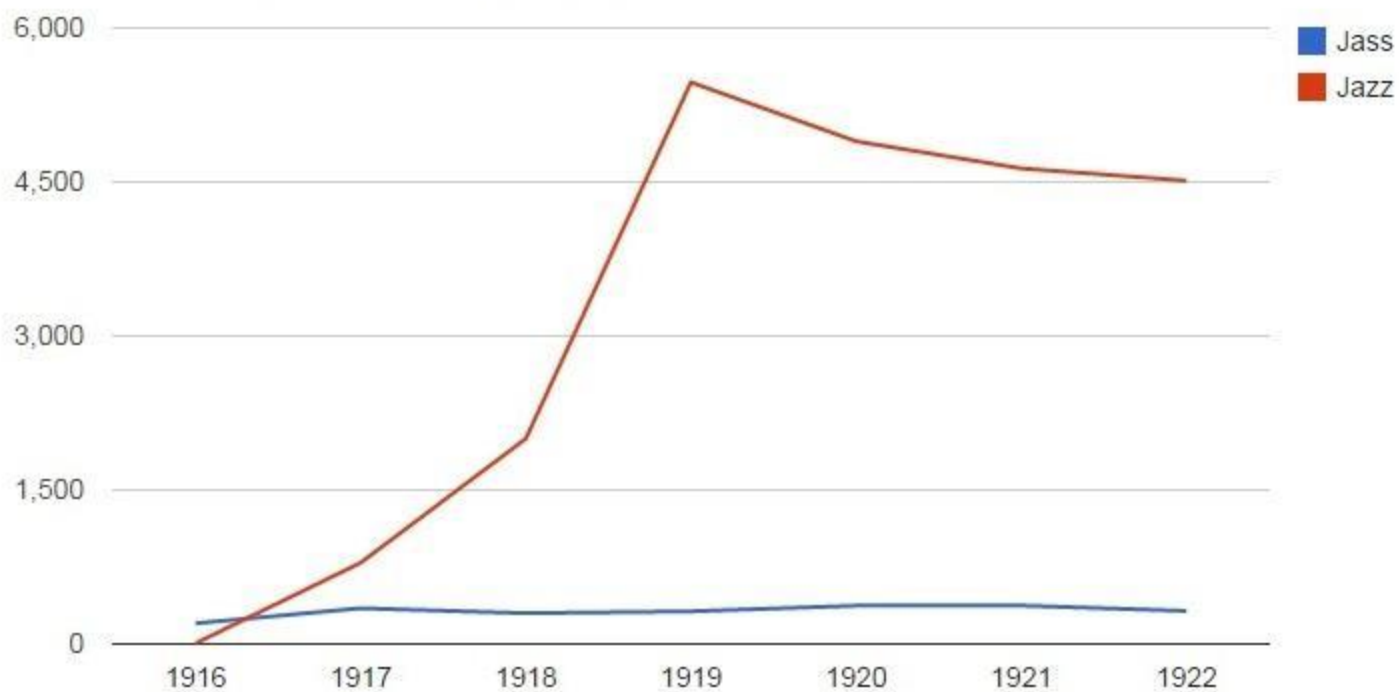
PUBLIC DEMANDS CLEAN DRAMA

THE coming of the war, with its creation of so many new interests and its steady and persistent call to the patriotism of all men and women worthy of the name of citizen, assuredly helped forward the movement towards

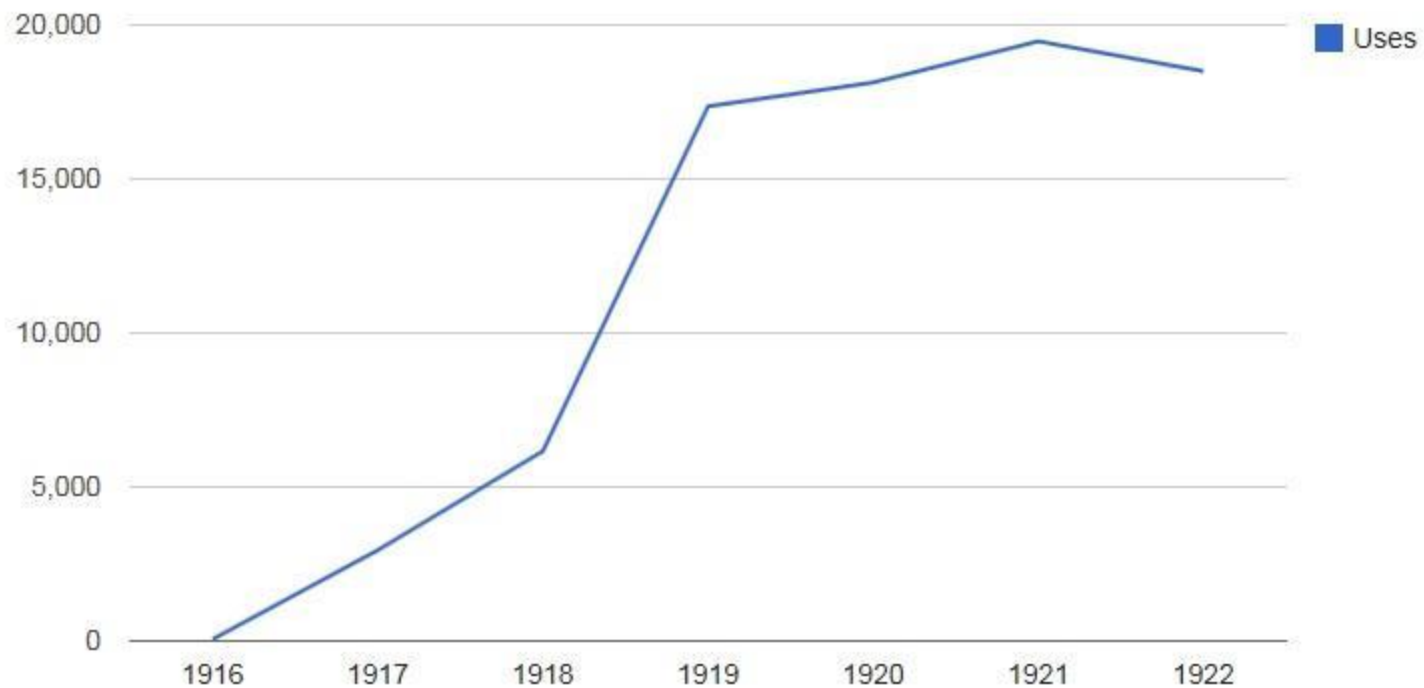
Other points of interest

- Extent of the role of WWI and military bands in advancing acceptance of jazz, at least in New York City
- Jazz music, dancing synonymous
- Exponential growth pattern in use of the word “jazz”

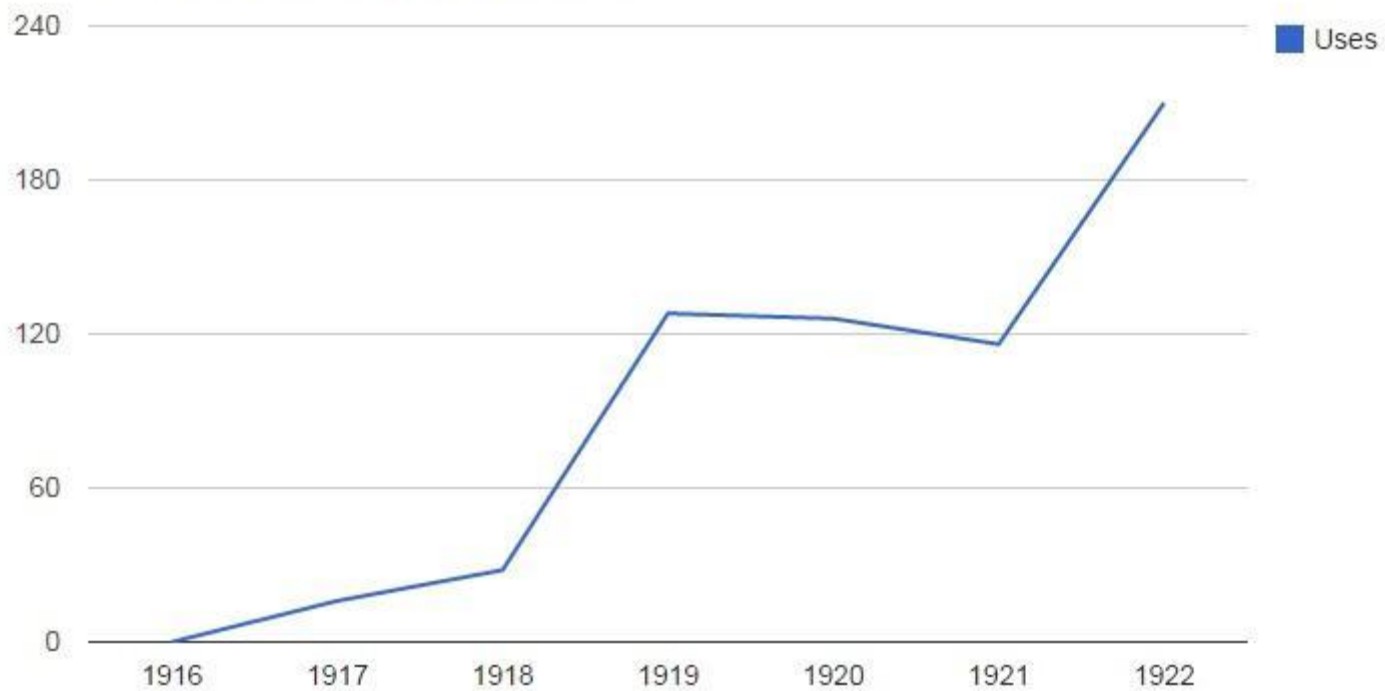
Jazz vs. Jass in Chronicling America, 1916-1922



"Jazz" at Newspapers.com, 1916-1922



"Jazz" in the New York Times, 1916-1922



Future directions

Expanded scope of research

- time interval
- sources

Comprehensive *Schimpflexicon*

Closing thoughts 1

- What a different picture the limited scope of media paints
- Need to digitize historical minority publications, and for open access
- The role of libraries in ensuring access

Closing thoughts 2

Moral of the story #1: Just because it's popular now doesn't mean it will stand the test of time.

Corollary: Just because it's unpopular now doesn't mean it has no value.

Moral of the story #2: Do what makes you happy as an artist, because the public memory is ultimately quite short.