

## **DOCUMENTING JAZZ 2020**

BCU, 16–18 January 2020

### **Valuing the virtual: The *Belgian JAZZ Discography* as online collection**

In 1967, the Belgian drummer and historian Robert Pernet (1940–2002) published *Jazz in Little Belgium*, a first attempt at a historical overview and discography of jazz in Belgium. In the following decades, Pernet kept collecting relevant discographic data, eventually resulting in the *Belgian JAZZ Discography*, a book that lists over 4,370 recording sessions made between 1897 and 1999 involving at least one Belgian jazz musician. This monumental work—around 830 pages—appeared as a limited edition only, and is now out-of-print. In 2018, CEMPER, the Flemish Centre for Music and Performing Arts Heritage, initiated a project that aimed at designing a framework through which the value of Belgian jazz heritage could be documented. Several approaches were considered, but ultimately it was decided that Pernet's *Belgian JAZZ Discography* was to be the focal point, transforming it into a virtual, online record collection.

In this presentation, we review this project's process and procedures, particularly focusing on the transformation of the physical discography into a virtual (in a Deleuzian sense) collection that allowed extensive assessment by an expert committee using certain parameters such as historical value or educational purpose. A number of opportunities and challenges that arose from this assignment, ranging from the more philosophical (why does such heritage needs to be valued?) to the more practical (how can this book be made accessible again?), are discussed as well. Overall, this case study addresses some fundamental issues relating to jazz, in particularly in the ways it can be valued, preserved, and documented.

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