

Risa L. Mulligan. The Closing of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. April, 2006. 72 pages. Advisor: Claudia Gollop

This project closely examines the circumstances and events surrounding the closing of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies, an event which unfolded over the years of 2003-2005. The author interviewed Clark Atlanta University students, faculty, staff, alumni, administration and representatives from other professional organizations in order to gain some insight into the event and the opinions and perceptions of those embroiled in it. This information, combined with published accounts of the closing, help to paint a clearer picture of what happened. Larger issues including reasons why library schools close, and the value of Historically Black Institutions are also discussed in the context of the closing. Difficulties in communication among stakeholder groups are among the findings of this research.

#### Headings:

Clark Atlanta University/School of Library and Information Studies

College and university libraries (Black)

Library schools/Closings

The Closing of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies

by  
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## DEFINITIONS

Alum: This word refers to CAU SLIS graduates, in order to protect the interviewees' gender.

American Library Association (ALA): "The American Library Association is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with more than 64,000 members. Its mission is to promote the highest quality library and information services and public access to information" (<http://www.ala.org>).

Atlanta University Center: This refers to the group of HBCU educational institutions including Morehouse College, Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse School of Medicine and Morris Brown College. They are clustered in Atlanta, Georgia.

Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA):

The Black Caucus of the American Library Association serves as an advocate for the development, promotion, and improvement of library services and resources to the nation's African American community; and provides leadership for the recruitment and professional development of African American librarians (<http://www.bcala.org>).

CAU: Clark Atlanta University.

CAU administrator: This phrase indicates any employee of Clark Atlanta University in a leadership position.

Committee on Accreditation (COA): "The Committee on Accreditation (COA) is responsible for the execution of the accreditation program of the American Library Association. Members of the committee develop and formulate standards of education for library and information studies for the approval of the ALA Council" (Ostler, Dahlin & Willardson, 1995, p. 95).

Conditional accreditation: According to the American Library Association,

This category is assigned to a program that must make changes to comply with the standards to enable accreditation beyond the date specified by the COA. Conditional accreditation is applied only to programs seeking continued accreditation... Accreditation, or continued accreditation, status is granted to

programs that demonstrate conformity to the 1992 Standards  
(<http://www.ala.org/ala/accreditation/accredstandards/ap3.htm>).

Historically Black College/University (HBCU): There is not a universally accepted list of schools which fit the criteria to be an HBCU. According to the National Center for Education Statistics website, “HBCUs are institutions established prior to 1964, whose principal mission is the education of Black Americans”  
(<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/hbcu/>).

Historically Black Institution (HBI): Another name for above.

Library association representative: This is a person that was in a leadership position in a state or national library association during the time of the closing.

Metro-Atlanta Library Association (MALA): “Metro-Atlanta Library Association was established in 1982. Its objective is to advance library interests and services in the greater Atlanta area” (<http://www.matlib.org/>).

Precandidacy status: According to the American Library Association,

Precandidacy indicates the institution and program’s commitment to achieving ALA accreditation. This status provides a mechanism for the program to establish, measure, and meet goals and objectives in order to achieve candidacy status and to comply with the 1992 Standards. Precandidacy also provides the program and the COA with a means to communicate formally about programmatic development Standards  
(<http://www.ala.org/ala/accreditation/accredstandards/ap3.htm>).

Recent alum: This is an alum that graduated within the years of the closure decision (2003-2005). The study requires a distinction between these individuals and alumni from the past.

SLIS: (Clark Atlanta University) School of Library and Information Studies.

VSU: Valdosta State University, located in Valdosta, GA.

## INTRODUCTION

The Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies, established in 1941, stopped accepting new entrants in the 2004-2005 academic year, due to a 2003 decision by the university administration. CAU, the only ALA-accredited university in Georgia, has shut down a school which produced a great number of library professionals a year, including a large percentage of the matriculating African-American librarians. The School was also successful in the placement of 99% of its graduates (Berry III, 2003, p. 8). The stated mission of CAU School of Library and Information Studies according to the website was, “educating library and information professionals who are culturally diverse and able to serve successfully in libraries and information centers throughout the world” ([http://www.cau.edu/acad\\_prog/library\\_info\\_stu/lib\\_right.html](http://www.cau.edu/acad_prog/library_info_stu/lib_right.html)). In an Atlanta Journal Constitution article, CAU SLIS Dean Arthur Gunn (1996- 2003) commented that the closure “could lead to a shortage of librarians in the state and decrease the pool of minority librarians across the country” (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E). Why did this institution close, and how will this closing affect the future of both library education and librarianship as a profession?

It is essential that the circumstances surrounding the closure of the CAU library program be examined in detail. 2004-2005 American Library Association President Carol Brey-Casiano stated, “We think it’s incredibly important that all library schools remain open, simply because there are only 52 in the country right now, and there is an incredible shortage of librarians across the country” (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E). Such a study is particularly necessary in light of the ongoing need for more minorities in the field. The fact that Clark Atlanta University operates within an Historically Black Institution is another indication that its demise deserves closer study. On its website, the American Library Association states its very first Key Action Area goal as Diversity:

Diversity is a fundamental value of the Association and its members, and is reflected in its commitment to recruiting people of color and people with

disabilities to the profession and to the promotion and development of library collections and services for all people (<http://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/governingdocs/keyactionareas/keyactionareas.htm>).

Clark Atlanta University is known for graduating librarians of color. A detailed description of its closure might help clarify some effective and ineffective ways to serve degree-seeking minorities in the future. It could perhaps also help with strategies for survival of other library schools nationwide.

Marion Paris' case studies of four library school closings proved to be a beneficial addition to librarian scholarship, and this study is a continuation of this type of research. Robert E. Stake writes, "With multiple approaches within a single study, we are likely to illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences. When we speak of methods in case study, we are again speaking principally of observation, interview, and document review" (Stake, 1995, p. 95). Studying the CAU School of Library and Information Studies closing as a case study would allow the researcher to summarize, in-depth, the facts of the event and the viewpoints of people affected by it. Unfortunately, the time allowed to complete this paper and geographical limitations prevented the researcher from completing some key aspects of a case study. However, results from this qualitative study should still be valid and useful.

The interviews combined with research of published materials on this subject, should illustrate the incident sufficiently enough to be able to glean some applicable information about library school closings. Recording the particulars of this instance will add to the small body of knowledge about such phenomena, and thus ultimately benefit librarianship as a whole. Anyone interested in libraries and the future of librarians should care about the professional education offered in the field, especially where such a unique program is concerned.

## BACKGROUND

### The History of the Library School

Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies was formed by very specific historical circumstances. Some of the controversy surrounding its closing has had to do with its status as the only accredited library program in Georgia (and one of few in the Southeast region of the United States). Some controversy arose from its status as one of two located at Historically Black Institutions (the other is North Carolina Central University in Durham, NC), and was the only privately-funded library school within an HBI. It is thus significant to explore this institution's past, and its role in the history of both general library education and of Black librarianship.

Since its establishment in 1941, CAU SLIS had the distinction of graduating more African American librarians than any other American Library Association accredited library school in history (Fullwood, 2006, p. 48). The school came about as a "direct result of segregation in the profession" (Kent, 1979, p. 196), because it was thought that the only way to educate African-Americans to be able to serve their communities, was to establish the graduate and professional programs within Black institutions. Rosemary Ruhig Du Mont and William Caynon note that,

historically, the development of library science education for blacks is mainly a chapter in Southern library history. Over 90 percent of the black population resided in the South during the period when the first library schools were being established at the end of the nineteenth century (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 109).

The original institution, called the Atlanta University School of Library Service, started as an all-Black school in September 1941 under the reigning president of Atlanta University, Dr. Rufus Clement. The first two faculty members were Wallace Van Jackson and Virginia Lacy Jones, with Lillie K. Daly as the librarian-secretary. Eliza Atkins Gleason was the first Dean of the library program (Jones, 1970, p. 33). The school became fully accredited in July of 1943, the only library school connected with Black



librarians to receive this status: “It became, from the beginning, the prime supplier of black librarians, not only for the South, but for the entire United States” (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 116). Its stated goal was always to “send into the field competent school, college, and public librarians who would develop into dynamic leaders for the nationwide improvement and expansion of library service, particularly in the southern region” (Jones, 1969, p. 82). Atlanta had actually housed a library school since 1899: the Emory University Division of Librarianship began that year as a six-month apprentice class, and changed its name to the Atlanta Library School in 1907 (Lawson, 1973, p. 29). However, this school was only for Whites.

The Louisville Free Public Library in Louisville, KY, was an apprentice program that served as the only source of library education offered to Blacks until the Hampton Institute Library School opened in 1925 (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 111). There was also a teacher-librarian training program formed with private funds from 1936 to 1939, which operated at various HBCUs in the Deep South, including then Atlanta University. Sutton writes, “The Negro Teacher-Librarian Training Program significantly increased the presence of formally trained African American school librarians in the South” (Sutton, 2005, p. 138).

The Hampton Institute Library School in Virginia lasted from 1925-1938. It existed primarily because the American Library Association, recognizing the need for trained Black librarians within their communities, deemed it the preferred institution in which to train them. Part of the reason was that it had a biracial faculty; since no Black librarians had been professionally trained thus far, this was considered a necessity for proper library training. The other reason was that it already had a very good book collection, and satisfactory library building. The ALA also noted that Hampton’s alumni were already “placed in black leadership positions throughout the South and could aid in the placement of the library school’s graduates” (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 113). However, by 1931, administrators were thinking of closing the library school. Reasons included its perceived limited capability to expand in its role as a provider of school and college librarians. Du Mont and Caynon write, “The lack of supervised practice and training for future public librarians and the school’s lack of central location for its potential student body were both seen as detrimental” (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p.

114). There was a concern that the library school's location at Hampton may be "keeping desirable persons from going to library school" (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 114), because the students might see the institution as more vocational than academic.<sup>1</sup> Also, students were heading to schools in the North because "degrees from these institutions were perceived to carry more prestige in the South than degrees from Hampton" (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 114).

The American Library Association commissioned a survey in 1939 to gauge whether there was still enough of a need for professionally trained Black librarians to warrant another library school. The survey proved that Blacks were interested in gaining the full professional training, so far, not offered to them, and that they would like the training to be offered "in a special school for Negroes in the south" (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 115). There were some people against the building of such a school, saying that it was unnecessary to have Black faculty teach the Black students. At the time, there existed some "mixed schools" (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 116), which took only a couple of African-American students at a time. However, some argued that the number of Black librarians needed each year was not enough to make this a problem. Without the ALA's survey, CAU SLIS may not have gotten its start.

Atlanta University, founded in 1865, was chosen as the location of the sanctioned African-American library school for many reasons. It was a recognized fact, at that point, that Black students from the South

had difficulty in meeting the entrance requirements of library schools outside of the South because of limitations of background and inadequate academic preparations. Consequently, a school in the South that would be able to recognize and deal with these deficiencies was seen as necessary (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 115).

It was also thought that Emory, being already established and in the area, would cooperate and share resources with the new school (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 116), though no collaboration would occur for quite a few years. Atlanta University was also picked because of its anticipated ability to provide financial support to the library school (196). Hampton sent AU its library science collection to the new class of 25 students. (There might have been more, but enrollment was strictly limited.)

In 1944, the Atlanta University School of Library Service faculty published a book called “Libraries, Librarians and the Negro”, as a response to all of the inquiries the school received about the status of library service to Blacks in the United States, and the career opportunities available to Blacks within the profession. This publication,

not only served to recruit Negroes to the library profession and to the Atlanta University School of Library Service, but also served to acquaint librarians and laymen with the acute need to extend the benefits of library service to Negroes through all types of libraries, particularly in the South (Jones, 1969, p. 83).

In 1945, the size of the class was increased due to an increasing demand for Black librarians, from 25 to 40 pupils. In 1947, Atlanta University was picked to sponsor the Public Librarians’ Conference because, “No library or educational agencies in the region had given any concerted and significant guidance and direction to the development of public library service to Negroes in the South” (Jones, 1969, p. 84). By 1951, the school had a significant international enrollment (Jones, 1969, p. 87), and White students started attending the school in 1961 (Jones, 1970, p. 40). The Atlanta University School of Library Service was approved for American Library Association accreditation in 1954. The high value placed upon librarians out of AUSLS could be demonstrated by 1969, when Virginia Lacy Jones wrote that “the school has never been able to fill as many as 5% of the requests it receives annually for professional librarians” (Jones, 1969, p. 87).

An institution called the Atlanta University System was formed when two liberal arts schools—the all-female, Spelman, and the all-male, Morehouse—created a partnership with Atlanta University. Atlanta University had started adding graduate programs to its curriculum in the 1930s, making it the oldest African-American graduate institution in the country (Williams, Ashley & Rhea, 2004, p. 329). In 1957, Clark University (founded in 1869), the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Morehouse School of Medicine and Morris Brown College joined the group to form the Atlanta University Center. The AUC is the oldest and largest consortium of historically African-American educational centers in the world. The Atlanta Heritage website notes that the center is well-known for “educating, training and inspiring Blacks for positions of local, national and international leadership” (<http://www.atlantaheritage.com/atlantaUniv.html>).

Clark University was renamed Clark College in 1940 when it joined the Atlanta University System. Atlanta University and Clark College merged in 1988 to form Clark Atlanta University. Today, Clark Atlanta University is one of six colleges and universities that make up the Atlanta University Center. According to its website, the mission of Clark Atlanta University is,

to provide a quality undergraduate, graduate and professional education to a student body that is predominantly African-American and also diversified by students from various other racial, ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. As an institution grounded in the liberal arts, the University is committed to the development of productive and creative students who excel in their chosen careers and who become responsible citizens in their communities and the world.... Clark Atlanta University is dedicated to preserving and disseminating the heritage of peoples of African descent.

A thorough knowledge of this institution's history and mission can help to further describe the effects of the SLIS closure. That is the intent of this author, to the extent possible, given the time and access limitations of this study.

### Changing Times for the Library School

Dr. Walter D. Broadnax became the second president of Clark Atlanta University on August 1, 2002 replacing Dr. Thomas D. Cole, Jr.<sup>2</sup> Also in 2002, the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies submitted to an accreditation review by the American Library Association's Committee on Accreditation, an event which occurs every seven years. The school had been accredited since its inception. That year, it was granted conditional accreditation (see Definitions). In the 62 years' history of the School, this is the first time that it had received that status (BCALA, 2004, p. 6). The ALA would have to come back in 2005 to evaluate whether the program was making headway into fixing problems the Committee had enumerated.

President Broadnax, Provost Winifred Harris and Dr. Gunn met with the American Library Association Committee on Accreditation on November 23, 2002. Dr. Gunn wrote a letter to be publicly posted on the Black Caucus of the American Library Association website, shortly after the closure decision in August 2003. According to him, President Broadnax assured the Committee on Accreditation that, regardless of the university's financial situation, SLIS would be supported by Clark Atlanta University. This verbal assurance came after he had written to the Committee indicating the very same thing (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>). During an appearance on a National Public Radio show in 2004, Dr. Broadnax explained that he had not known all about the financial difficulties at that time (Kopp, 2004).

It is not the practice of the ALA to publicly state reasons for limited accreditation of an institution. Dr. Gunn's letter listed the "challenges" presented by the COA before full accreditation could be reinstated. According to him, these had included:

1. Develop a Strategic Plan showing broad-based participation.
2. Conduct a systematic review of the curriculum.
3. Increase research and scholarship.

4. Demonstrate that the University will provide the financial resources needed to support the education program.

The BCALA website summarizes these “challenges” on their website: “It is true that the School received conditional accreditation status from the American Library Association in four areas (1) Goals and Objectives; (2) Curriculum; (3) Faculty; and (4) Administration and Finance” (Black Caucus of the American Library Association, personal communication, 2/16/2004). In light of the circumstances, President Brey-Casiano later “downplayed the accreditation issue, saying the issues identified by the ALA were relatively minor and would be inexpensive to address” (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E).

The goal of this study is not to analyze whether these items were being addressed within the context of regaining accreditation, but it is worth recording them as things which may have been seen as impediments to the school remaining open. An ALA COA representative did state to the researcher that if those reasons are misrepresented in some way, the organization would act to counter the misinformation.

It is also important to note that the conditional accreditation status granted by ALA in 2002 did not necessarily affect that subsequent closing. Koenig writes,

The accreditation standards (as they now exist and as the current revision seems to be taking shape) haven’t helped prevent some schools from self-destructing. Those schools had no difficulty in satisfying the accreditation process, even though it was clear to most knowledgeable observers that they needed feedback and major redirection. Accreditation is based on the goals of the school itself” (Koenig, 1990, p. 724).

However, the occurrences were fairly close in chronology and naturally seemed to be related, so that they are often mentioned together both in the media and by some of these interviewees.

On June 20, 2003 Dr. Broadnax announced to the Associated Press that Clark Atlanta was having financial difficulties, and may need to cut some academic programs (Associated Press, 2003, p. 1). It was on July 23, 2003 that Dr. Gunn and other SLIS faculty and staff met with President Broadnax and Provost Dorcas Bowles. At that time, the president announced plans to recommend to the University’s Curriculum Committee and Academic Council that the school be closed by the end of the 2004-2005 academic

year. Students who had been admitted to attend CAU SLIS in the Fall of 2003 would be given two years to complete the degree requirements.

Dr. Gunn wrote in his BCALA statement:

We do not know the committee composition or the criteria that were considered. We were told that the Curriculum Committee would begin to review the recommendation as early as Friday, August 1, and then make their recommendation to the Academic Council (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>).

The Implementation Committee assigned to financially evaluate CAU SLIS had not told anyone at the school that they were doing so. It is unclear to this researcher exactly when the financial evaluation occurred.

Dr. Ismail Abdullahi, a CAU SLIS faculty member, spoke at a Metro-Atlanta Library Association meeting March 30, 2004 and explained his perception of the events that took place. MALA's notes for that meeting read:

After his arrival, Dr. Broadnax hired the Stillwater Consultant Group to analyze the university's financial problems and develop a strategy of financial recovery. The Stillwater recommended cost reduction strategies for financial recovery of CAU. Following the still water report, the university setup an implementation committee that did not include SLIS faculty. The implementation committee recommended the closure of five academic programs that includes SLIS. This recommendation of the closing of SLIS was presented to the University Academic Council on August 18, 2003 and the council rejected the recommendation by fifteen members voting no, one in favor and one abstention.

Despite the rejection of the recommendation to close SLIS by the University Academic Council, President Broadnax presented the recommendation of the implementation Committee to the Board of Trustees on October 17, 2003 as a package to phase out the five programs. Recently, SLIS faculty and Alumni has challenged the financial data presented by the implementation Committee to the Board of Trustees did not include the state grant/contract of 475,000 for 2003 (<http://www.matlib.org/2004SpringMeetingMinutes1.htm>).

The same day he recommended closure to the Board of Trustees, Dr. Broadnax also sent a letter to "The Clark Atlanta University Family." In it, he informed the university community that the Board of Trustees had approved Broadnax's (and the Implementation Committee's) proposal to close CAU SLIS. Other programs closed included the Department of International Affairs and Development, the Department of Allied Health

Professions, the Department of Engineering, and the Systems Science Ph.D. program. He also made the announcement to the news media. Dr. Broadnax explained the decision and described his plan:

The phase-outs are strategic and targeted to allow allocation of resources to areas of strength where we can, do and will excel. When implemented with care and discipline, they will allow us to eliminate deficit spending – and I cannot overstate the seriousness of our financial position—and will assure financial well-being.

Students in the affected areas will be able to finish their coursework and earn their degrees. We understand there will be questions, and they will be answered as arrangements are finalized in the coming weeks. In regard to faculty and staff members whose positions will be eliminated, every effort will be made to assist them in their futures beyond Clark Atlanta University (Dr. Walter D. Broadnax, personal communication, October 17, 2003).

This document indicated that the phase-out would be complete in 2007. In various news articles, figures on the budget vary from a 7.3 million dollar deficit to one of over 8 million. In the news release, Dr. Broadnax listed the figure at 7.5 million dollars. The entire Clark Atlanta budget was about \$100 million. He commented,

The plan adopted today is focused on keeping Clark Atlanta University viable and strong for the long term... . We have made difficult decisions in regard to individual programs, but we have made the right decision for the university as a whole (Dr. Walter D. Broadnax, personal communication, October 17, 2003).

People immediately voiced opposition to the closing of the different schools, but Dr. Broadnax had specific reasons for choosing the five programs. As for CAU SLIS one reporter wrote, “Broadnax said CAU's library school has long battled money problems, apathy and declining enrollment. ‘They have been struggling for a long time,’ he said (Tofig, 2003, 1G).” CAU SLIS had been receiving a \$500,000 grant since 1988. According to Dr. Gunn, this first came from the Mayor’s office, and then recently from the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. This grant money had originated as a contract with the library school “for its valuable assistance in providing Georgia with librarians holding ALA accredited degrees” (Black Caucus of the American Library Association, personal communication, 2/16/2004). The money was meant “to support scholarships for Georgia students in the program” (Goodes, 2003, p. 14). However, in 1999 it had been announced that Valdosta State University<sup>3</sup> would be



implementing a library school of its own, also funded by the Board of Regents (and which also planned to later seek ALA accreditation). There was a fear that the state grant would cease funding for CAU SLIS in favor of the new program.

A general conference with the students was held soon after the decision was announced. A summary of the meeting with the CAU president was related by Dr. Gunn in the aforementioned statement sent to the Black Caucus of the American Library Association in August. According to Dr. Gunn, SLIS employees here received the news that, a “special committee comprised of faculty and administrators” (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>), had conducted a covert study on the SLIS program, which lead to the decision to shut it down. Dr. Gunn recounts that he later spoke with the Chair of the Curriculum Committee. She was actually unaware of any decision to discontinue the school, and she said that her Committee “would not begin any consideration of the recommendation until after the start of Fall Semester 2003” (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>). Dr. Gunn’s letter protested the decision and called for support from the library and HBCU community.

Newspaper articles later wrote about the library school closure that school officials said it would be costly to address issues such as a curriculum overhaul and a technology upgrade (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E). President Broadnax described the action taken as “right-sizing” (Freightman, 2005, p. 10) the university. In the October 17, 2003 news release, Dr. Broadnax had summarized the reason CAU SLIS was scheduled for closure: “The School of Library and Information Studies has had compliance issues in regard to accreditation, a lack of technology, low student enrollments and the need for additional faculty resources (Dr. Walter D. Broadnax, personal communication, 10/17/2003). Marcia Cross, Special Assistant to the President for Operations, said the decision was made for both academic and financial reasons. She stated that there were also concerns that too much of the department’s budget came from the Board of Regents grant. Cross said that the grant money, “is not something we could really depend on, and we don’t have the finances here to do this major overhaul that would be needed to get them up to speed” (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E).

According to the Association for Library and Information Science Education, in the fiscal year 2001-2002, the total income for CAU SLIS was \$869,509. \$369,509 of that came from the parent institution. \$500,000 came from the annual state-provided grant (Association for Library and Information Science Education, 2002). In the year 2002-2003, the library school received the comparable amount of \$779,261. \$304,261 came from the university, and the grant monies equaled only \$475,000 (ALISE, 2003). According to Dr. Gunn's statement, this was "because of state cut backs" (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>), and would be the same amount for 2003-2004 as well. No continuing education funds or research funds were spent in either year's budget. In protesting the decisions, ALA representatives would point out that CAU SLIS received a larger proportion of outside funding than most library programs of its size (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E).

The ALA made the bold assertion with the data gained from ALISE that,

This financial analysis shows that the School of Library and Information does not represent a cost to the University and that the closing of the School would not assist in the financial recovery of Clark Atlanta University. Also, this analysis illustrates that the School is not an impediment to the financial health of Clark Atlanta University. Rather, this analysis demonstrates that the School is cost-effective as well as a cost-beneficial component in the University (BCALA, 2004, p. 5).

The organization also asserts that the CAU Board of Trustees, when making their decision on the future of the library school, were basing their decisions upon budgets which did not include the state grant.

As of the Fall 2001 semester, CAU SLIS had enrolled 65 students in its Library Science program. In terms of ethnic breakdown, 36 were Black, 22 were White, six were of another ethnicity, and one was Hispanic (ALISE, 2002). By Fall 2003, the last semester that the school accepted new applicants, that number had increased to a total of 90 enrollees. The percentage of African-Americans had increased to 86% of students in the program. Of the 90 students, 77 were Black, 11 were White, and there were two others representing another ethnicity (ALISE, 2003).

### Actions Taken

Several things happened over the course of the next two years. Ron Chepesiuk wrote that faculty was supposed to be reduced to four fulltime members and several adjuncts (Chepesiuk, 2004, p. 32). Another reporter wrote that, “the university began a series of staggered layoffs and offered retirement buyouts to tenured faculty” (Tofig, 2003, p. 1G). According to the researcher’s interview with a CAU administrator, staff lost included Dr. Brown and “a lecturer position that was responsible for all of our technology courses.” Dr. Anita O’Neal stepped in as Interim Dean of CAU SLIS in January 2004 after Dr. Gunn’s retirement on December 31, 2003. The library program had seen its enrollment drop by half, to 47 students (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E). Of course, most of the information recorded about the event detailed opposition efforts by people who opposed the decision.

Different prominent library associations got involved. The Black Caucus of the American Library Association formed a special task force that had since August 20, 2003 been investigating the facts surrounding the potential closure of Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies. The CAU Ad Hoc Task Force’s objective was to work on “strategic actions in support of the School of Library and Information Studies and BCALA’s position on the matter” (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0309&L=jesse&D=0&P=3662>). Its conclusions helped to determined BCALA’s ultimate opposition of the closing and its subsequent measures in support of CAU SLIS.

The Metro Atlanta Library Association also demonstrated their support. According to July 27, 2004 meeting notes, Dr. Abdullahi again spoke at a MALA meeting and gave a “detailed chronology” (<http://www.matllib.org/MeetingNotes-7272004.htm>) of events surrounding the Clark Atlanta University’s Board of Trustees’ decision to phase out the school. Also in attendance were Acting Dean Dr. Anita O’Neal and Dr. Fazle Kabir, CAU Faculty member. Dr. Gaumond, 2004 Georgia Library Association President, was there and asserted that the Georgia Library Association could

“provide some political leverage in support of library schools in Georgia”

(<http://www.matllib.org/MeetingNotes-7272004.htm>). MALA President Dr. Rick Wright then also wrote a letter to the CAU Board of Trustees urging them to reconsider the SLIS closure. They received no reply acknowledgement of their letter (<http://www.matllib.org/MALA-StatementJuly272004.htm>).

Meeting notes from the MALA website further indicated that:

On July 15, 2004, American Library Association (ALA) councilor Kathleen Bethel traveled from Chicago to personally deliver a letter from ALA to the CAU board of trustees requesting a reconsideration of the SLIS phase out. Ms. Bethel and Dr. Abdullahi were unable to deliver the letter because the location of this board meeting was not made available to them (<http://www.matllib.org/MeetingNotes-7272004.htm>).

On September 29, 2003, Dr. Gunn held a public meeting in the Auburn Avenue Research Library and specifically invited CAU Alumni to discuss “strategies to convince CAU administration to continue supporting SLIS” ([http://www.bcala.org/announcements/announce\\_archive.htm](http://www.bcala.org/announcements/announce_archive.htm)). This effort yielded about 80 CAU alumni and supporters. Deans of Southern library schools met in this “Day of Solidarity for Clark-Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies,” to hear keynote speaker Dr. E.J. Josey. Deans, Directors, and Department Heads of Library and Information Science Programs came from across the Southeast, including Dr. Arthur Gunn, the CAU SLIS Dean provided hospitality for the deans, directors, and department heads and other members including were Elizabeth Aversa (University of Alabama), Robert Ballard (North Carolina Central University), Dan Barron (University of South Carolina), Vicki Gregory (University of South Florida), Wallace Koehler (Valdosta State University), Beth Paskoff (Louisiana State University), Jane Robbins (Florida State University), Douglas Raber (University of Tennessee), and Lee Shiflett (University of North Carolina at Greensboro). This event was hosted by Valdosta State University (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0309&L=jesse&D=0&T=0&P=17579>). They were ignored by the CAU administration. To supplement this effort, Dr. Gunn also urged the public to, “join us in a massive letter writing campaign directed at appropriate University officials and the Board of Trustees letting them know just how vital we believe the School to be to the Nation and the profession” (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi->

bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987). Another meeting was organized for October 14, 2004 in CAU's Robert W. Woodruff Library; about 75 people were in attendance.

The American Library Association was very vocal and active in this fight, perhaps partially due to the possibility that the conditional accreditation status given to the school may have affected the forthcoming decision. The ALA and its divisions tried to explain their rating, and hastened to express their support and faith that CAU SLIS was going in the right direction to be able to meet unconditional ALA accreditation in the coming years.

Dr. Abdullahi invited ALA President Brey-Casiano to Atlanta. She attempted twice to communicate ALA support for the school, in unsuccessful attempts to meet with the CAU president. Brey-Casiano wrote in her statement posted publicly on the ALA website:

I had already written to the board and president on two occasions with no response. I corresponded one more time asking for a personal meeting. Receiving no answer after two telephone inquiries, I flew to Atlanta hoping that my presence would be difficult for the administration to ignore. The morning of the scheduled university board meeting, I managed to get past security and make it to the door of a board committee meeting before I was confronted and asked to leave. However, I first inquired about the opportunity to talk with University President Walter Broadnax and miraculously found myself face-to-face with him outside the boardroom. Still, he refused to allow me to address the board, stating the decision to close the library school had already been made—even though I reminded him that they had not heard the American Library Associations position or the views of SLIS faculty and students (<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=News&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=77692>).

On October 15, an ad-hoc rally at the university's Science and Research Center was organized by Brey-Casiano, Dr. Gunn, and 2005 graduating student Colin Dube, following the Board's decision not to meet with her. Brey-Casiano relates:

We then put plan B into action and invited members of the Atlanta library community and others to a hastily organized press conference and rally. Approximately 50 individuals gathered shortly after noon on the steps of the building where the board meeting was being held, carrying placards, giving speeches, and shouting 'Save Our School.' The result was extensive media coverage that increased the region's awareness of the school's plight. We succeeded in spreading the word about the Clark Atlanta SLIS nationally, and spent time strategizing with faculty and students regarding next steps... (Freightman, 2005, p. 10).

In her written statement, Brey-Casiano also added: “If the administration and board won’t hear us, how can we be sure every avenue has been exhausted”

(<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=News&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=77692>).

2003-2004 ALA President Carla Hayden, 1995-1996 ALA President Betty Turock, and 2003-2005 President of the Association for Library and Information Science Education Louise Robbins also wrote letters of support. (Ms. Robbins’ was made publicly available on the ALISE website.) From Hayden’s 9/12/2003 letter:

In light of the urgent need for librarians who can serve our country’s diverse communities, this closure would have a significant impact on the quality of library service available to people of color in the region and the entire country ([http://www.libr.org/juice/issues/vol6/LJ\\_6.22.html](http://www.libr.org/juice/issues/vol6/LJ_6.22.html)).

Meanwhile students took action and formed a group that lobbied against the closing and tried to engage alumni, the community, and other organizations into taking positive action. Save Library and Information Studies representative Warren Watson explained, “We’re going to raise money on our own and advocate moving this program somewhere else” (Albanese, 2005, p. 20).

According to Dr. Abdullahi’s speech to MALA on March 30, 2004, Valdosta State University had offered their help, but were similarly shunned by CAU administration. MALA meeting minutes read:

Valdosta State University offered alternative cooperative solutions including absorbing some expenses and adding CAU tenured faculty to their SLIS program. However, CAU administration refused the offers and would not meet with representatives from Valdosta State University (<http://www.matlib.org/2004SpringMeetingMinutes1.htm>).

In January 2005, The Alumni of the Clark Atlanta University (CAU) School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) wrote a letter to the Board, which was posted for a little while on the BCALA website. It requested a chance to come and speak at a February 2005 meeting of the Board of Trustees. In it, the Alumni offered “**to do the work** – including, but not limited to fund raising, grant writing, and making donations (in-kind and monetary)” required to keep the school open (Alumni of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies, personal communication,

1/14/2005). The Alumni seemed to stay very involved with the situation, as shown by a later letter addressed to “Fellow CAU SLIS Alumni and Supporters”:

As some of you know, the focus of efforts have been in the following areas:

1. contacting as many SLIS Alumni as possible and forming an SLIS directory;
2. several appeals (letters, phone calls, personal contacts) to the CAU Board of Trustees, the Board Chairperson and key Board members asking them to reconsider their decision to close the SLIS;
3. letter writing, fax, and email blitzes to the Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue, Lieutenant Governor Mark Taylor, Congresspersons Major Owens, Cynthia McKinney, John Lewis, and David Scott, and various Georgia state legislators – soliciting their support in keeping the CAU SLIS open beyond May 2005;
4. letter of appeal soliciting support for keeping the CAU SLIS open to Dr. Michael Lomax, President of the United Negro College Fund; and
5. letters and contact with several key CAU alumni, ministers, and local politicians soliciting their support for keeping the SLIS open (Alumni of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies, personal communication, 3/24/2005).

According to Dr. Gunn, several projects were in the works at CAU SLIS which would have increased the school’s value. He said that Ira Revels from Cornell University, a Convener in the BCALA Executive Board as well as a member of the CAU Ad Hoc Task Force,

has spearheaded an effort to collaborate with CAU/SLIS in developing a digital library program. The initiative has been awarded a planning grant in the amount of \$75,000.00, and has the potential to give the School and the University tremendous visibility across the nation. The Provost and the Vice President are aware of this, and the potential budgetary implications were discussed during our

budget hearing for 2003-2004 (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>).

Dr. Gunn commented that these particular actions did not have the desired effect upon the CAU leadership: "...[I]t does not appear as if this emerging relationship was considered at all" (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>). In the same document, Dr. Gunn listed another example of such projects:

The faculty of the School views an emerging relation with SOLINET as another rich potential for the School. We believe that we can develop a continuing education program that could add greatly to moving the School toward self-sufficiency. As an example, we offered one one-week course this Summer Session in cooperation with SOLINET. The cost to the University was \$3,844.00. Income generated through this one course was approximately \$26,000.00. Once again, if supported at even a very modest level, we feel certain that the School could become a source of increased revenues for the University and the School... (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>).

And a third:

The School has received its second grant in three years from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. They total approximately \$200,000. On the first, SLIS students traveled through the State of Georgia to install and train staff members for small rural communities in the use of information technology. Other schools had received similar grants to support three library school students. We were told at the time by the Gates evaluator that our students were so impressive that we were awarded four grants, something that had not been done for any other education program. Our second Gates grant pays all tuition for two students committed to service in a public library (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>).

Dr. Gunn's description of such projects as those mentioned above demonstrates the school's commitment to its community, to Georgia, and to raising money. No one can know how the fulfillment of these projects might have affected CAU SLIS or the university. However, such actions are indications that the school was attempting to move in new directions, whatever the impetus.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Marion Paris' groundbreaking 1986 dissertation, "Library School Closings: Four Case Studies" is still constantly referenced in scholarly literature on the subject. Though hers is a broad examination of a phenomenon involving four schools, her detailed description of each instance served to guide this research on CAU SLIS. Her work was pivotal, and sparked much discussion on the topic, but not a large amount of additional research. The few studies that further examined the library school closing phenomenon have not refuted Paris' findings. Paris' comment at a 1991 symposium on the subject is still relevant: "beyond occasional news items and informal gossip and speculation, there has been little systematic treatment of this important professional subject" (Paris, 1991, p. 259).

In her research, Paris looked at guidelines that one university was using to determine the best way to handle a financial crisis. The Vanderbilt University "reassessment model" was developed to evaluate its programs and act, by virtue of "a combination of internal reallocation of resources and/or contraction of size and scope" (Paris, 1986, p. 6). Paris adapted these criteria to each of the four institutions she studied, in order to try to discern "a pattern of predisposing factors" (Paris, 1986, p. 117) for library school closings. The six categories, and short descriptions were:

1. Essentiality of the Program to a University, or its "relevance to a university's mission" (Paris, 1986, p. 9).
2. Quality of the Program, or its "extra-institutional potential for excellence as measured, for example, against other library schools" (Paris, 1986, p. 10).
3. Need for the Program, a "normative judgment based on the university's own view of society's educational needs" (Paris, 1986, p. 11). Paris adds that this is

4. “without regard for whether the members of society see the in exactly the same way” (Paris, 1986, p. 11).
5. Demand for the Program, as “determined by the program’s enrollment and by success of its graduates in the job market” (Paris, 1986, p. 11).
6. Locational Advantage, or “geographic, demographic and cultural benefits” and disadvantages” (Paris, 1986, p. 12).
7. Cost-Revenue Relationships and Cost Implications.

Paris’ main finding was that isolation of the schools within the university communities, unresponsive and complacent library school leadership, lack of credible justification for the school’s existence, mission redefinition by university administrators, “turf battles” with other departments and “poor quality” were other factors in closings (Paris, 1991, p. 260).

In “Perspectives on the Elimination of Graduate Programs in Library and Information Studies: A Symposium,” published in 1991, Kathleen M. Heim and J. Keith Ostertag expand upon Paris’ assertions of how library programs might survive. Their argument is that library programs need to align themselves with the goals of the parent institution in several areas. These scholars believe that in order to survive, library schools need to be important to the “fundamental mission of the organization” (Paris, 1991, p. 283) and excellent in quality.

In 1995, Ostler, Dahlin and Willardson, also bemoaning a lack of scholarship on this subject, published “The Closing of American Library Schools.” This work is not based on empirical research, and is largely conceptual and broad in scope. They sought to develop a whole new perspective on studying library school survival by applying cross-disciplinary analysis. Ostler, Dahlin and Willardson’s overriding theory was that “the way an organization behaves is controlled to a significant degree by forces from the external social environment” (Ostler, Dahlin & Willardson, 1995, p. x). They divided previous library school closing perspectives into two schools of thought. The Business-Management Perspective posits that programs disappear because of “deficiencies in leadership and marketing on the part of library schools” (Ostler, Dahlin & Willardson,

1995, p. 2). And the Classical-Scholarship Perspective faults the library school for failing to “...strengthen their curricula by tapping the resources of the universities with which they are allied,” which results in “intellectual poverty and stagnation in library school curriculum” (Ostler, Dahlin & Willardson, 1995, p. 3).

To this general summary, the authors added their own guesses as to why library schools close. These included (somewhat falling under the Business-Management, marketing aspect of libraries) that the programs might have trouble identifying themselves in changing times, making it more difficult to assert themselves as important, viable entities: “Library schools have suffered greatly not only from how they perceive themselves but also from how they are perceived by the other parts of the institution. They apparently have been easy prey” (Ostler, Dahlin & Willardson, 1995, p. 36). They also cite institutional leadership’s failure to strategically plan for library scene changes (Ostler, Dahlin & Willardson, 1995, p. 37), such as technological advances.

Ostler, Dahlin and Willardson wished to add some fresh ideas to the general body of knowledge in the subject of library school closings. Paris began her research because she wanted to find a pattern in the rash of library school closings that had occurred (or were scheduled), in order to prevent such closures. In contrast, this paper simply looks at an individual event involving an undeniably unique program. However, it is still helpful to examine the CAU SLIS closure within the model Paris provides. Paris writes about her use of the Vanderbilt University example, but her words can be applied to this paper:

It is not a purpose of the present study literally to evaluate defunct Master of Library Science programs emulating the efforts of a panel like Vanderbilt’s. Rather, the Vanderbilt reassessment model has been employed rhetorically to serve a twofold purpose: first as a logical structure in which to place factors only conjectured to be related to library school closings, and second as a basis for question (i. e., hypothesis) formulation and subsequent case analysis (Paris, 1986, p. 9).

Though Paris’ guidelines are useful in deeply examining the CAU SLIS closure in context, the voices of the participants themselves, along with the special circumstances of this event should also be presented on their own terms. A comparison can be made between the reasons the library schools in Paris’ study closed, and possible reasons CAU SLIS shut its doors. However, the details of the event and the speculations of its consequences are provided for information and speculation.

## METHODOLOGY

There seemed to be to be several populations affected by (and affecting) this event. Each group might have differing opinions and experiences regarding the closure, and useful information could be obtained from each. The research population was contingent upon the availability of the subjects and the time frame of the research. However, since interviews with the entire population affected by this event would be impossible, the researcher has attempted to take a representative sample. The data collected from participants was supplemented with that already published in newspaper articles or scholarly sources about the subject. The goal was to create a detailed account of the closing, any expectations of the program's future, and predictions from library professionals on what this means for librarianship.

Among the types of qualitative research methodologies, there are many, varied definitions of what constitutes the in-depth research called a "case study." Earl R. Babbie, a social researcher, defines it as "the in-depth examination of a single instance of some social phenomenon"...(Babbie, 2004, p. 293). In "The Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences," a case study is listed as a "descriptive record of circumstances and events relating to the emergence of a particular issue or problem in a specific library or information center" (Du Mont & Caynon, 1989, p. 124). Robert E. Stake adds that a case is an "integrated system" (Stake, 1995, p. 2), and that we study such objects because, "We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories" (Stake, 1995, p. 1). The closing of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies represents a familiar occurrence in library education over the last twenty years, but is also a special case that deserves closer inspection. We want to know more about the program closure because it is both interesting and able to be generalized.

True case studies involve much more in-depth examination of, for example, the physical site of the former library school. With more time and resources, the CAU SLIS

records and paperwork could have been examined; they are bound to be full of cogent facts. The many listservs, websites, and personal papers offered by willing respondents could have been combed and summarized. With enough time and energy, this research could go much deeper. Studying this event like a case study allows the researcher to summarize in-depth the facts of this school closing, the viewpoints of people affected by it, and the published materials and interviews. However, as mentioned before, circumstances prevent a true case study in this instance. Stake writes, “Almost always, data gathering is done on somebody’s ‘home grounds’” (Stake, 1995, p. 57). To complete a true case study, a researcher should visit the SLIS physical site, search the primary documents in the archives, and interview participants in their own environment. Instead, this paper represents results from qualitative research similar to a case study. Babbie also asserts that the chief purpose of case studies can be a simple description, or may “form the basis for the development of more general, nomothetic theories” (Babbie, 2004, p. 293). This paper consists of the recorded, organized, and interpreted the viewpoints of its participants, but some conclusions are left for the reader to use and further develop.

Participants were selected based upon nonprobability, purposive sampling. One definition of purposive sampling reads: “A type of nonprobability sampling in which you select the units to be observed on the basis of your own judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative” (Babbie, 2004, p. 183). A combination of available subjects and representative capability was used to select participants. The study population was limited and self-determining. Groups were chosen because of their documented or self-proclaimed involvement with the school during the time of the closing.

Five recent alumni, four past alumni, two CAU administrators, one representative of a local library association, and one representative from Valdosta State University were interviewed. No one who fit these categories was excluded from the study. Neither did anyone contact the researcher that did not fall within the requirements for participation. Seven CAU Board of Trustee members answered correspondence, though six declined interviews. One explained via email that “CAU discontinued the program in order to focus our financial resources on larger, stronger academic areas and due to lack of future

demand.” Another one gave valuable insight as to reasons why the Board did not grant interview requests:

I would decline the request for the interview, because it is my long-time experience with boards that doing so could compromise my own professionalism with the Board. And it’s just not good practice to have conversations outside about matters where there was a board decision. This was a formal process, very thoroughly reviewed, based on lots of information... . As a matter of principle, it is not good standards for board members to converse outside of board meetings about matters of board business where there were decisions made. It is considered, I think, a discredit to fellow board members to do that.

The survey instrument consisted of six main questions, asked of all participants. Additionally, there were one to two extra questions asked, depending upon their identity with the abovementioned groups. Information was obtained mainly through telephone interviews (see Appendix A). The duration of each interview was about half an hour, and were made from the researcher’s home. Each question was meant to be sufficiently broad to elicit responses about the general situation before (Question 1, “What is your opinion on why the Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies closed?”), during (Question 3, “What is your perception of the circumstances surrounding the closing?”), and after (Question 2, “Do you think anything should have been done differently by yourself or anyone else? If so, what?” and Question 4, “What do you perceive as some of the consequences of the closing?”) the event. Question 5 (“Please describe any opinions you have on the future of Historically Black Colleges/Universities.”) and Question 6 (“Do you think this particular library school closing was different than any other you know about or heard of? Why?”) delve into the participant’s opinions and thoughts regarding the unique status of the school. The other questions are ones relevant to individual positions.

For the interviews, a Panasonic micro cassette voice recorder was used, and the person usually placed on speakerphone. They were read the Telephone Consent sanctioned by the Institutional Review Board, and then informed that the seven or eight questions would be the only ones asked. Each participant was asked the same broad questions, with the goal of letting them describe the subject as they wished.

Babbie, in listing the pros and cons of telephone interviews (versus those in person), writes that telephone interviews are “cheaper and more efficient” (Babbie, 2004,

p. 275), which sums up the reason they were used in this study. The questions on the survey sought to gain insight into the opinions of the interviewee, and their role in the situation. But Babbie writes, “People are, to some extent, more suspicious when they can’t see the person asking them questions” (Babbie, 2004, p. 268). However, time and resources for the most part prevented personal interviews.

The studied population was self-selected. There was only a relatively small number of people involved in the aforementioned populations during the time of the closing. Confidentiality was important because of the nature of the investigation, and it was preserved at all times. Participants were recruited via emails to people mentioned in news articles and websites about the subject. Letters and emails were the primary method of contact. A couple of participants were acquaintances of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill faculty, and referred others to the study.

Some assumptions were made prior to research. It was assumed that much of the information gathered from interviews would largely consist of more descriptive and subjective accounts of the events already related in newspaper articles and professional journals. It was also expected that most respondents would voice a negative view of the closing. Based upon some published opinions, it was anticipated that many participants would blame the Clark Atlanta University Board of Trustees for their loss. It also seemed logical that most participants would predict a resulting detrimental effect upon librarianship. These assumptions mostly turned out to be true with a few notable exceptions, discussed in the Results. All of the data captured in this research are, by nature, biased but should still hold validity in light of the fact that all of the participants are representatives of the professional librarian community.

## RESULTS: *An In-depth Examination of the Circumstances*

### Before the Closure

In different newspapers and scholarly journals, there are various representations of the university's reasons for closing the school. It is the same with participant's answers; there was no agreed-upon reason why the school was shut down. However, there are several themes that respondents discussed.

The financial issues of the school were of course mentioned by every interviewee. Dr. Broadnax provided the official CAU explanation: being \$60 million in debt. In his interview on National Public Radio, he summarized,

we [CAU] have to pay our bills just like everybody else... and so when you added all this up... we were having difficulty keeping the school going, and the analysis that was done said if you don't do something right away, it's going to be like the school going into bankruptcy. And you'll have to close your doors (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4159489>).

Paris writes that, "Although financial exigency does not directly cause the closing of library schools, it provides a rationale" (Paris, 1991, p. 263). Most people interviewed regarded finances as the main reason SLIS was shut down. In answering Question 1 ("What is your opinion on why the Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies closed?"), one recent alum answered, "I felt it had to do with the institution's funding. The school was having financial problems and they needed to cut. I think they basically couldn't afford to keep the school going." A representative of a local library association echoed, "My opinion is that the controllers of Clark Atlanta University decided that it would be in their best financial interests to close the school." Several alums expressed concern that bad financial dealings led to the SLIS demise. One respondent mentioned "unstable financials," or "poor management" and another



replied that he had been told: "...There is funding or budgetary problems that the school was not... running financially sound. And that the program itself was losing money or costing the university as a whole...."

Though all of the respondents cited financial reasons as a reason CAU SLIS shut down, not all actually accepted that reason—which was the official response of the CAU administration—as the truth. The participants expressed a considerable amount of doubt as to the veracity of what they were told. A past alum stated:

The discussion that came out of it was that the school actually was financially stable [and that it] actually had a surplus [of funds].... I think that there may have been... instances where there may have been questions which proved that there was funds available.

The Atlanta Journal Constitution reported that a graduating alum felt the decision to eliminate the program was "arbitrary" (Donsky, 2004, p. 1E). Another past alum said, "I really didn't understand why they closed. For a school [the library school] that was actually producing a profit for the school [CAU], I just thought it was really weird for them to close down a successful program." The person continued, mentioning the Georgia state grant as a reason why CAU SLIS would not have closed due to finances:

Clark Atlanta, it was not finance. This was something that, I... feel deeply, was planned and something was sought out to end this school... if you look at the numbers, and you look at the production that the school was doing, and you look at the fact that ALA was behind Clark Atlanta, and said that the school was moving in all of the right directions to rectify the problems that they did have—meaning technology-wise—there was *absolutely no* [italics added] reason for a school like the library school at Clark Atlanta to close when you had all of the agencies supporting the school and willing to step up and do all of the necessary things. I think this was something that was sought out simply because of revenge, or just no longer wanting Atlanta College to have a resource within CAU.

According to the literature, they might have been correct to question leadership. Marion Paris quotes Herbert S. White in her dissertation:

the problem is not now, nor has it ever really been, one of money. University administrators have budget difficulties, but the level of library school expenditure is trivial and is not the cause of that difficulty, nor will cutting or eliminating the program solve [administrators'] problems...If [administrators] threaten to cut or eliminate, it is not because of a need to preserve money. It is because of the need to make a political gesture, and the perception that cutting or eliminating library

[school] programs is an acceptable sacrificial [*sic*] action, either because it is assumed that nobody will care, or because the university will be little affected, or both of these (Paris, 1986, p.13).

Though written over twenty years ago, the idea is still relevant, and can be analyzed in the CAU SLIS situation. Paris maintains this view of the veracity of university leadership in five years later:

It was widely understood at the time that funding concerns alone motivated the closings, and university administrators did little to dispel that notion. Finances were what the public understood, and in the absence of explanations that were probably more truthful but much less palatable, the simplest reason, that of financial exigency, was the one more readily believed and accepted (Paris, 1991, p. 260).

The state grant CAU SLIS had been receiving was obviously perceived by many to be in possible jeopardy. In his BCALA statement, Dr. Gunn wrote,

The SLIS has relied on a grant from the State of Georgia for the past several years. We are aware that continuation of the grant is threatened by the prospect of the Valdosta State University education program being accredited. This prospect seems to have been the overarching reason for the ‘committee’ in reaching their decision. We were told that the University would not be able to absorb the added expense for the School should the grant be discontinued. There was no discussion that we are aware of that focus[ed] on developing a plan to would result in the School achieving some level of self-sufficiency (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>).

The very first item that BCALA listed in its advice to CAU SLIS leadership was to, “immediately lobby the Georgia State Legislature to insure the continuation of the State’s annual grant/contract to the Library School” (Black Caucus of the American Library Association, personal communication, 2/16/2004).

Two alumni associated the financial (re)evaluation of SLIS with the installment of a relatively new president in the university. A past alum commented, “There was a new president, and I think that there is some tradition and history in the school that should have been taken into consideration.” Paris discovered something similar in her studies. She wrote, “It is extremely disturbing that library education programs were so easily eliminated as university officials reshaped the missions of their institutions” (Paris, 1986, p. 145). Assuming some policies and objectives change with new leadership, the respondents’ perceptions match those of Paris. Another past alum noted,

I think primarily that he [Dr. Broadnax] did not see the importance, or did not recognize the importance of the library school. I think that he was very concerned about finances of the overall institution and that he saw, for whatever reason, chose to see the library school as a drain, or as—not as a producer of revenue for the college.

These participants felt that the president did not see or respect the history or unique education the program provided. In the library association representative's words:

Dr. Broadnax sensed that if you add the School of Library and Information Studies to this program and this program, we come up with a magic number that would satisfy the Board of Trustees, that would satisfy perhaps the accountants, and his constituents... .

And a past alum said,

from various meetings and talking to people and actually attending various informational sessions and meetings, this is what the—some of the administration from the library school was informing us—that the library school itself was sound financially; that they *did* [italics added] have money and that it was more or less a... conflict of interest I guess. The president, being that he was from a different... really wasn't from academia but was from business and was looking at strictly by-the-numbers, which... conflicted with the reports.

Journal articles also report the president being mentioned in connection with the closing: “‘President Broadnax came in and decided he needed to make budget cuts,’ said Lorene Brown, a former SLIS dean and later an adjunct professor in the school. ‘But he didn’t ask for any input from us’” (Chepesiuk, 2004, p. 32).

Others echoed this general sentiment without pointing the finger directly at anyone. A CAU administrator said, “I think what was so difficult to understand by most people, who had such close identity and ties with the library school, was that this particular library school’s legacy, history, and the importance was not considered.” Another CAU administrator intrinsically cites the new president by contrasting his/her perception of support from the previous one:

We fought constantly about issues in the library school... funding and support. But in retrospect, I would say that honestly, [Dr.] Cole was very supportive of us. Money was always an issue at Clark Atlanta University, but the reality was that there was very little that we asked for that we did not get.

One CAU administrator broke down the financial situation from a different stance:

I believe our closing actually goes back to 1988, when Clark College and Atlanta University merged to form Clark Atlanta University. And I believe the attitude was, anything that did not have undergraduate components would not be appropriate at Clark Atlanta. And there is a reason for that. We know that at Clark Atlanta, given the number of students on some level of financial aid, for every 100 undergraduates enrolled, the university realizes about 1 million dollars of income. So it is very, very important that that undergraduate enrollment increase significantly in order to undergird financial support for the university. We were the only unit on the campus that did not have an undergraduate component, so, I believe, we were a target from day one. And that's the reason I think the library school closed.

Herbert S. White, in the 1991 symposium on library school closings, echoes this sentiment by saying of library school programs, "They are small, and because graduate programs always cost more than undergraduate programs do, they are perceived to be expensive.... In private universities... tuition comes largely from students, who themselves may underwrite the lion's share of the institutional budget" (Paris, 1991, p. 262).

In an academic environment, finances are often synonymous with student enrollment and recruitment. Herbert S. White wrote that, "The failure to attract enough students can have serious consequences" (Paris, 1991, p. 262), to a library school budget. A CAU administrator mentioned the school's goal to increase student enrollment, which implies seeking greater income. Another recent alum felt the answer to Question 1 ("What is your opinion on why the Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies closed?") was, "Money. I felt that the weakest program was the first to go as far as recruitment, as far as participation." This was one of two times that respondents drew an association between the closing and the program being "weak," but both participants specified that this weakness was not an actual one, but merely perceived by the CAU administration as such. This leads into issues of quality.

There was a significant impression held by some respondents that the accreditation status of CAU SLIS was largely to blame for its closure. Newspaper articles quoted the CAU administration confirming its hesitancy to contribute money to the institution due to its substandard performance: "The university could not afford to provide the financial and faculty resources needed to bring the academic program 'up to a standard of excellence'" (Freightman, 2005, p. 10). As a response to the question asking

what a person could have done differently to prevent the closing, a CAU administrator protested that, “The SLIS faculty had already begun to revise the curriculum, develop a plan for increasing faculty scholarship and research, and initiated a very successful student recruitment program.” It is clear that this administrator associated the limited accreditation with the school being shut down. The administrator listed “helping to sustain accreditation” as one way in which people pulled together to try to reverse the decision.

Accreditation is an important determiner of the quality of a library school program, as Heim and Ostertag argue:

Those characteristics that help to identify programs as excellent are largely the result of individual faculty commitment to publication in high-quality refereed journals, fostering the careers of outstanding graduates, or obtaining important grants and contracts. nevertheless, ‘excellence’ in library and information science is only judged against a handful of accredited programs (Paris, 1991, p. 287).

However, it may create a catch-22 situation. Paris found that when a university analyzes a program, “Quality is more important than cost, which becomes an issue only after quality has been questioned” (Paris, 1991, p. 265). This may apply to CAU SLIS, as evidenced by the sequence of events in the closing. Unfortunately, Paris also discovered that, “Accreditation by the American Library Association would not save a doomed program from elimination” (Paris, 1991, p. 261).

The possible accreditation of Valdosta State University’s library school was directly alluded to by few participants, but a total of five respondents mentioned the Valdosta program, mostly by comparing the two schools. The Valdosta State administrator explained that the VSU Master of Library and Information Science Program focus and education was different than that of CAU SLIS (for example, VSU had a lot of distance education programs), and that the two were not and would not be in competition for students. This respondent pointed out that the purpose of VSU’s library school program was not to compete with, but to complement Clark Atlanta’s education. References by other interviewees were inconsistent and vague, perhaps indicating a general lack of information about the school:

I believe that the [library school] institution, was passed to Emory, and Emory was passed to us, Clark Atlanta, and so now Clark is being passed supposedly to

Valdosta State or either they want to, take on what we had, but I don't know how true that is.

Others simply argued in defense of the CAU SLIS program over VSU's. A recent alum admitted that, "Valdosta... is in candidacy for certification, but that could be anytime between now and the next 2 to 3 years." Said another:

I think it offered some benefits that are advantageous to African-American and minority populations based on the fact that it's in a major metropolitan area which offers transportation options, and work options, and probably a social network that library schools such as the one in Valdosta and in other states don't offer.

This opinion seems to be reflected in the fact that Metro Atlanta Library Association President Wright, also posted a letter of support on its website for a continued library school presence in metro Atlanta (<http://www.matllib.org/MALA-StatementJuly272004.htm>). Dr. Wright noted MALA's support for CAU SLIS as well as VSU and its library school program. The MALA letter also suggested that VSU hold some classes in metro Atlanta rather than in Macon, Georgia.

In all, there were differing opinions regarding VSU's program. In her research, Paris found that there is often a general perception that the existence of a different institution of library education in the area would help to pick up the business of the one closing (Paris, 1936, p. 142). Such a perception could encourage the people closing it. The local library association rep recognized that having a library school in Georgia was beneficial, but also echoed the sentiments regarding the limited options in Valdosta, GA:

Speaking as a Georgian, I think that's a positive outcome [having a library school in Valdosta], but some outcomes not as preferable...as far as the faculty and staff and collective memory of Clark as fathers and mothers, professionals, individuals who need to maintain an income need to go to where they can best continue their profession... .

A past alum mentioned:

I think it [CAU SLIS] offered some benefits that are advantageous to African-American and minority populations based on the fact that it's in a major metropolitan area which offers transportation options, and work options, and probably a social network that library schools such as the one in Valdosta and in other states don't offer. I think that would be a deterrent to other African-Americans attending library school, which is going to bring that number down in Georgia and across the nation.

Tim Wojcik, a previous MALA president, expressed a similar sentiment in a letter to ALA President Brey-Casiano (and copied to the CAU president and Board of Trustees Chair), posted on the association's website:

People from every inhabited continent continue to arrive in the metro Atlanta area seeking the prize of our opportunity and lifestyle. These people have education and socializing needs that our library community is charged to serve. Educating librarians is a vital link in accomplishing this socializing integration (<http://www.matlib.org/letter2carolbc.htm>).

Two interviewees, both past alums, implicated VSU's existence as a potential cause of closing CAU SLIS. One said, "I also think that the emergence of a new library school, that has yet to attain ALA accreditation, at Valdosta State University... which is a state funded institution, also played a role in the closing of the library school."

Dr. Broadnax, spoke on the radio about another problem that he saw with the CAU SLIS, which no one else mentioned—aging staff. He cited the library school in particular as a "prime candidate" for the phase-out because

people who were not 'up to speed,' let us say, in terms of the new technologies... the new developments in the library science profession. And to bring them up to speed was a monumental undertaking, and to replace them would have been a monumental, multi-million dollar undertaking, so it made sense to phase the school out.

On the show, Dr. Gunn countered this statement by pointing out that other programs at the school—ones which do not enjoy the success that CAU SLIS does—cost much more than the library school.

There were three people that expressed opinions that the school closure was somewhat inevitable. A recent alum felt that "they [CAU administration] realized that it was an older program but they just couldn't support it anymore." A past alum saw an "unfortunate" justification in the closing, stating "I don't think, from a business perspective, there was a plan to maintain it." This person concluded: "And I think that instead of fighting to keep something open, and bring in fresh faculty, and a new edge, and at least *try* [italics added]... you know, we don't have that opportunity."

There were many opinions on why the school closed, and just as many on what was, or what should have been, done about it.

### Closure

People expressed a variety of opinions on what could have been done to stem the tide of the closing, and many were based upon finances. A past alum posited, “I think a five year plan should have been written to show them that there would have been an increase in staff, an increase in finances, a marketing plan. A business approach to show that the school is viable.” This person thought that “more effort should have been made from the administration, both in the library school and both of the graduate school and the school itself to maintain the school.” A CAU administrator believed more outside funding should have been garnered for the school, including by the faculty:

There were no grants coming in. There really was not a lot of scholarship coming, so the kinds of things that are generally looked at in a higher education, that give reasons for promotion within the program, that just didn’t happen.... Faculty members had become a little complacent.

However, this individual was unsure of what could have been done with tenured faculty, for whom there is no review or incentive to change their teaching or scholarship patterns. Echoing accreditation recommendations made by the ALA, BCALA had also suggested that the school pursue funding by stating, “The Faculty of the SLIS must write proposals and grants, particularly to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency which recognizes the acute shortages of librarians” (BCALA, personal communication, 2/16/2004).

Others spoke of outreach and publicity. The following comments are actually indicative of a current trend in librarianship. Many librarians have spoken of the need to promote the library to outside groups in order to survive. This comment relates to library school closings, working to keep library schools in existence, and the profession in general:

[There should have been] Probably more of a recruitment or promotion of the school via advertisement, whether TV, radio, fliers... I think the key is awareness. I think the profession as a whole needs advertising. People are just not coming to be librarians. People aren’t interested in the profession anymore. Those that are interested are primarily interested in school librarianship<sup>4</sup>, not public, or any of



the others. It's a hush-hush type field—you don't hear much about it. People just don't know about it.

This respondent later added: "People just aren't going into librarianship. And now people are not into research and they don't know how to become one."

Communication was the overriding theme within the interviewees. When consulted on what could have been done differently in the situation, many people cited communication with alumni as a possible fix. A past alum stated, "I think maybe if they reached out to the alumni and had gone out into the public, and if there was some plea to keep the school," then an alternative to closure could have been found. It was a recommendation of the ALA as well that, "approximately 2,500 alumni of the School should be organized immediately at the local, state and national levels. A contribution of \$1,000,000 should be requested from the alumni over a three year period" (BCALA, personal communication, 2/16/2004). However, others said they had detected a general lack of mobilization by the alumni. One past alum stated,

I think that the school could have benefited perhaps if there were a more organized alumni association. At the time that the closing was announced, it seemed to be somewhat difficult in order to mobilize the alumni into an action plan as far as... taking some sort of action regarding the closing of the school. It seemed, from information that I received as an alumni, from the dean of the school, it seemed as if... the decision-makers were very much left out. The decision had already been made, and there was not very much that could have been done, but I still think as an alumni, if we were already organized... we may have been able to be a bit more vocal.

A recent alum countered, "I don't think the alumni could have done much to keep it open," a statement which also implies a lack of alumni involvement in this instance.

One thing that several people mentioned was a lack of communication from the administration (both of the university and the library school) to the students. A recent alum notes, "I think everything that could possibly have been done on our end, was done. It's just that the administrators were not listening to us." Another general theme, having to do with lack of communication, was a disbelief and/or distrust in official comments about the situation. The recent alums, for obvious reasons, were the ones that spoke most about this problem:

I know definitely one classmate who dropped from the entire program after she found out.... I feel that we should have been informed better about the closing... I

think the reason why the Dean refuted [that it was being closed for financial reasons] was because they didn't want any further... drop-outs of the students in the program to... damage it even further.

The person went on to say,

So I think we should, the students... should have received better information, truthful information, regardless of what effects it may have had on others... I really think that that wasn't fair for some students, you know, with regards to all the situations that they had to adjust or make adjustments with... not just school but also... everyday issues with regards to childcare and other kinds of things that, you know, that are part of your daily life with regards to attending school.

During the conversation, the respondent specifically blamed the miscommunication on “not just the CAU SLIS department, but the university representatives as well. So no one you know really took up the ball and handled that responsibility correctly.” A CAU administrator opposed this notion:

The students were first and foremost [and we] ...did not want them shortchanged in any way, either by perception or in reality. The university administration also had the same commitment and supported the students in every way possible... They provided some increased scholarships for them and some of the former faculty was hired as adjunct faculty during this time because we wanted to make sure that the quality of the program remained the same.

Mistrust can be seen in the aforementioned situation with Dean Gunn and President Broadnax at the Committee on Accreditation meeting in November 2002. According to Dr. Gunn, Dr. Broadnax had expressed his support for the library program to that committee, calling it a “jewel” within the university. The COA's meeting minutes are confidential, and not available to the public. However, Dr. Gunn's impression of the president's opinion was shared by Norman Oder in his Library Journal article, one of the earlier pieces published on the event:

On October 15, 2002, in fact, CAU President Walter Broadnax offered enthusiastic support for the SLIS in a progress report to Jane Robbins, chair of the American Library Association's Committee on Accreditation. 'I am fully supportive of the Action Plan,' he wrote, citing efforts to recruit faculty, increase faculty publications, and expand enrollment (Oder, 2003, p. 16).

The president later made the decision about the closing. Though this researcher was unable to locate a primary statement about the closing by Dr. Broadnax beyond the Associated Press snippets, Dr. Gunn writes about the “jewel” statement:

When he was reminded of this in our meeting, he responded that he was unaware of the University's financial situation when he wrote/made the statement. Assuming that the Vice President for Finance briefed the President about the University's finances prior to the Chicago trip, we wonder why both now say that they were unaware of the financial challenges facing the University and the School (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>).

Dr. Gunn describes other lack of communication as well:

We wonder why we were informed of this decision only three weeks prior to the start of the 2003-04 academic year without having been given the opportunity to work with the Administration to devise plans to ensure self-sufficiency and the continuation of the School. The timing of the decision is curious (<http://listserv.utk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0308&L=jesse&P=2987>).

One recent alum expressed a mistrust of the closing in general, stating:

In my opinion, I don't think it was something that should have been done to a program. I think they should have put a little bit more research into closing that program, or checking other avenues or resources if that was the problem.

This respondent also implicates the Clark College and Atlanta University merger as a possible cause of the closing that administration would not admit: "Even my supervisor, who was a graduate of CAU, said that they were trying to close down the school [when he/she graduated during that time]." A CAU administrator also detected some "spin" being created by university leadership:

[With an] overall operating budget of \$850,000, and \$650,000 of it came from soft monies, one can understand that we were not a financial drain on the university. But in President Broadnax's comments to the media, he gave the impression that the school was in millions of dollars worth of debt, we had no technology, that there was no way to revive the school, even though he had promised the Committee on Accreditation that...if *anything* [italics added] survived at Clark Atlanta University, that it would be the library school. And I believe he reversed himself because of a mandate from the Board of Trustees.

The local library association representative expressed some feelings of missed communication with the CAU SLIS administration:

I attempted to get some information ... about the final class and just what [was] going on with the school, and unfortunately the flow of information out of the Clark Atlanta School of Library & Information ...was not voluminous. I mean, there was not a whole lot coming out from them. I did attempt... to stay somewhat in the loop, and whatever loops there were, I was not included with them.

This participant later elaborated:

In my opinion, the Clark Atlanta School of Library & Information Studies could have been a little more generous with the information that *was* [italics added] able to be shared with the association so that at least it could have been ... disseminated to the local library community. I pulled some teeth there, but there was very little there. And you know, maybe to the extent that people had to protect themselves, because maybe they were working out of position, maybe they were working on getting into another department, I don't know. But I was disappointed in... it just seemed as if once it was a done deal that the school was closing, I wasn't hearing from Clark Atlanta people anymore.

Such comments spark some question as to what attempts were actually made to garner local support for the program. Yet there are countless news items describing various organizations' very active efforts to change the decision. A CAU administrator offered opposition to many different alumni opinions about SLIS communication and the actions taken:

The students protested, the ALA leaders visited our campus, and did what they could to provide support to save the school, the deans of the other library schools in the Southeast met here on campus to strategize and offer their help and assistance, and of course there were many, many...editorials and articles that flooded the professional journals. We also got a lot of press. Radio and television coverage of this issue was extensive. Based on all of the things that happened, I just don't think that there was anything, which I can think of, that we could have done differently... .

This person concluded:

I fully believe that we, and when I say 'we,' I'm including the faculty, staff, the students, the alumni, the professional colleagues that we had, and also the professional associations, did all that they could possibly do to impact and reverse that decision. Some of those activities included the hundreds of letters that were written to the University leadership, communications with the Board of Trustees, the Georgia legislators, the United Negro College Fund, and the petitions and resolutions that were presented from various groups of stakeholders... .

The association representative ultimately assessed positively actions taken during the closing:

In retrospect, I think that what was done by the community, and that is the Clark Atlanta Library School community, the greater Clark Atlanta school and the CAU alumni and the professional librarians, both in the local area, in the state, and in the national area, I believe we responded professionally and correctly. I think to have a different outcome, perhaps if some national, extremely prominent

personality came forward with a very, very, very large check and convinced the school that it would be in their best interests, perhaps the outcome could have been different... should we have done something different... no, given our level of influence.

It is worth noting that besides talk of purposeful miscommunication, there were many instances where respondents seemed to simply not know the facts, whether the subject was different library schools that closed down, actual budget figures, enrollment numbers, etc. When asked Question 3 (“What is your perception of the circumstances surrounding the closing?”), a recent alum said:

I don’t really know a lot about that part of it, but as far as I know, the enrollment was declining and it was felt that the school wasn’t really bringing in much in terms of research or anything like that.

This person is partially correct, but very tentative and seemingly not well-informed about their school. This could reflect the same problems with communication discussed above, or simple confusion in a stressful situation.

Any traumatic situation like this will have many naysayers, but it is useful to know a little bit about an insider’s experience of it. Several respondents described how their own and others’ personal and professional lives were affected by the closing. A past alum said:

I’ve experienced other colleagues of mine not in the profession but wanting to pursue a degree in Library Sciences, and the frustration that they’ve encountered by having to either do a distance/online type of degree program or having to pay out-of-state tuition, which is definitely expensive, as well as travel great distances trying to pursue this degree.

Another past alum stated, “I personally was interested in going back to school. Now that option is not available to me.”

Interestingly, the recent alums were by no means more upset than the other groups studied. However, they did have the unique experience to be able to describe their inner view of going through a library school closing. A recent alum describes the situation they were placed in upon enrolling in the school, and then hearing about its closure plans:

I think that as being the last class, that we were kind of shafted, being that we were not able to finish in a comfortable time, as others would have....I think that there was not a lot of support given to students who went through the program.

Another recent alum spoke about the troubles with,

...courses being closed, and changing everything. And so that was kind of hard for some people to deal with and refigure... not to mention by having to take maybe more courses than what you wanted to, in a shorter amount of time than you had planned to be enrolled in the entire program to finish your degree. It also caused financial stresses.

A different recent alum echoed, “I didn’t really want to take as many courses as I had to take, especially my last year... .” This respondent later spoke of “all of the different issues that we had to deal with regarding taking more courses, paying more money for the courses, and other expenses and just rearranging our schedules in different ways to accommodate that closing.”

One past alum and one recent alum expressed the extreme changes they had to undergo in their lives to adjust to the closure, both involving moving and drastic changes in professional goals. A recent alum summarizes:

Well, I didn’t have a good experience. Yeah, I got the degree, but at the same time, it cost me a lot, both financially, mentally, personally, you name it. I don’t know if I had a choice, would I do it again. I don’t think so.

The CAU SLIS closure provoked much comment and criticism regarding the way it was handled, and affected many people’s personal and professional lives. The event will continue to do both in the future.

### Consequences

Now that the school is officially gone, with no known plans to reinstate it, the most pertinent questions have to do with the future.

Some comments were about short-term issues, such as the future of the school's archives.

You've got the absence of the school, you've got archives, you've got a collection which I believe for the present will remain at the Woodruff library, but the rest of that both paper documents and digital documents, I don't know where it all goes, but it doesn't stay at the school because the school no longer exists. So, that's not necessarily a bad outcome, but the tendency for it to go this way and that and not to stay housed in one place under one authority... there's some risk there. To eventually the library community not knowing where pieces of it went.

This library association representative was one of two respondents to point out the importance of having a recorded history of the school. A past alum also mentioned:

Myself personally being interested in African-American library history, I'm concerned about what happens with the records of the school, and where they will land, and who will have access to them so that the legacy of the school will be preserved, and I'm not sure where the records are, and who has them, and if they'll be accessible.

A possible reason for this interests in the archives can be gleaned from the words in a follow-up letter from the Alumni to the Board of Trustees: "We also ask the CAU Board of Trustees and Administration to preserve and make accessible all documents and materials of the CAU SLIS for the next five years in order to facilitate the effort to move/reestablish the Library School" (Alumni of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies, personal communication, 3/24/2005). Two CAU administrators later talked about this issue, though they did not agree on the fate of those records. One mentioned that immediately after the school closed, there were strong efforts to "make sure that the records and resources were accounted for," and said that the items were being sent to the Woodruff Library archives: "I know that folks are still hard at work trying to make sure that the library school records and resources are available for

those persons that might want to know more.” The other had doubts as to the ultimate destination of those items:

A real concern that I had and I know others have, is what’s going to happen to our history? What’s going to happen to our records? And we quite frankly have absolutely no faith whatsoever that the university will do what it ought to do in terms of making sure that those records are kept intact.

Many of the participant’s responses had to do with the uniqueness of CAU SLIS, and things that would be affected by its demise. There were some comments about the local effects of the closing. Said one past alum, “I think that Clark Atlanta [University] will suffer, and enrollment will go down, which of course means income will go down.” According to the participants, such local effects also included a loss to the Atlanta and greater Southeastern U.S. region. A past alum stated of the school, “The advertisement was that CAU was the only library program in the Southeast.” Another agreed saying, “I think the state of Georgia will suffer because there is no accredited library school currently in the state.” A recent alum predicted:

It’s really going to hurt the areas within the next 2 to 3 years. [You will] see a significant difference, because you’re not going to have anyone in those areas to reach out to those people because the avenues which produce the demand for librarians is no longer there, so as a whole it’s going to be a very, very significant decline and it’s going to affect a *lot* [italics added] in the metropolitan area of Atlanta.

Alison M. Sutton articulates a logical reason why removing a southern library school could be considered a bad idea:

While a few library schools are located in the southern region, many of these programs are scattered across the Northeast and Midwest. Census migration data confirm that over the past three decades, the South has developed into a regional magnet for African Americans, more so than for Whites or other races. This renewed appeal of the southern region is especially prevalent among African Americans with higher education levels (Brookings Institution, 2004). Today, as during the time of the Negro Teacher-Librarian Training Program, geographic location should be factored into the effort to recruit, educate, and prepare more African Americans in the field of library and information science. A geographic focused recruitment strategy may do more to increase the numbers of the African American librarians than any effort to date (Sutton, 2005, p. 147).



The VSU administrator also noted that CAU SLIS's status as a library school in Georgia was special by virtue of its location. This person pointed out that essentially two-thirds of Georgia's library education programs have been destroyed in a short period of time. A recent alum shared such opinions on the resulting effects of the program's closing on Georgia libraries, but denied a national effect and also any particularly unique traits of the school:

I don't think [the closing] will have that much of an effect nationally because of the state of the profession. I do think it will have an effect in Georgia, especially among the public libraries, and some of the academic libraries. But I think nationally, there are enough other schools to kind of take up from where they left off.

Chepesiuk disagrees, writing that the loss would be felt beyond the state as well. The author also conveys the ire of librarians unaffiliated with CAU SLIS, at the closing:

Representatives from most of the country's large public library systems came to the SLIS to interview its graduating students, [said] Sylvia Sprinkle Hamlin, the director of the Forsyth County Public Library in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 'The CAU administration tried to explain its action, but it didn't give one good reason why the school should be closed'" (Chepesiuk, 2004, p. 32).

In their "Appeal to the Clark Atlanta University Board of Trustees, Financial Supporters, and the President," the Alumni of the School of Library and Information Studies noted other particulars about this library school, which would make its demise different from that of other schools. Among the special qualities of that particular school, they listed that CAU SLIS held as its tenets,

bridging the digital divide... the CAU SLIS challenged its students to find ways to meet the needs of the information poor and was, thereby, responsible for the national and international focus on the issues of information literacy and information access beginning in the late 1980's... [It] emphasized the critical need for its graduates to assist in ensuring that all people, especially the disenfranchised, the poor, and people of color – nationally and internationally – are not left behind. **No other Library School had or to this day has that emphasis**" (Alumni of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies, personal communication, 1/14/2005).

The affects of CAU SLIS's closure on minority librarians was alluded to by every respondent but one. A past alum said, "I think that some of the negatives for it closing is that you won't produce as many African-American professional librarians."

Another reiterated, “I think there’s going to be a strong decrease in the number of African-American librarians.” A recent alum asserted, “I see a definite decrease in the supply of African-American librarians. And not just African-American librarians, but also other librarians that went to the school, Caucasians, Asians, and different races, that is a major loss to the community.” One CAU administrator believed:

We are not going to be able to diversify the library profession the way we need to because the other library schools are not going to have as their mission and purpose the training of librarians who are minorities. [CAU SLIS] graduated the highest percentage of Black leaders in librarianship, but it has always had other racial and ethnic groups as a part of its student population and also its faculty. So with that in mind, I just think that the consequences of the closing will be, that it’s going to be much more difficult for libraries of all kinds to diversify their professional staff... . It is also important to note that this school’s program placed an emphasis on providing library services to the underserved and ... I believe that this commitment will be missing.

The idea is perhaps shared across the nation. The Final Report of the Diversity Task Force of the Council of University of Wisconsin Libraries dated 2004 stated that “Closures of library schools, in particular that of Clark Atlanta University, mean that there will be fewer new librarians from underrepresented groups in the pipeline, for at least the short term”

(<http://www.uwsa.edu/olit/cuwlweb/Diversity%20Task%20Force%20FINAL%20REPORT%2011-5-05.htm>). A past alum also felt this way:

Across the Southeast region and branching out further across the United States, the number of... African-Americans specifically, there will be less of us interested in pursuing Master’s degrees in Library and Information Science, and in the profession. And therefore a lot of universities, public libraries, schools, will not have the luxury and advantage of a diverse or different people from either a collection standpoint, philosophical, or just seeing someone in the library that looks like you.

Several interviewees were quick to mention that the CAU library school educated many groups of people, including Whites and international librarians. However, both the history of the school and the current opinions and frustrations expressed about the closing belie a general perception of a threat to minorities, and to African-Americans in particular. Warren Watson, of CAU SLIS class of 2005 and founder of the aforementioned Save Our Library School group explained:

We looked at whether this was a library education issue, a state issue in Georgia, or an African American issue, and we felt this was a greater blow to library education for African Americans. We feel that our presence in the African American community matters (Albanese, 2005, p. 20).

In The Alumni of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies statement, the authors highlighted the uniqueness of the school as, “the only Library School with the historical and current mission of preparing professionals to serve the information needs of all citizens, and in particular the information needs of those of African descent” (Alumni of the Clark Atlanta University School of Library & Information Studies, personal communication, 1/14/2005). Connie Green Freightman writes that Colin Dube, president of the ALA’s student chapter at CAU posited that in a field that already has too few African Americans, other schools will not be able to fill the void left. She also reports that ALA President Brey-Casiano said in relation to the CAU SLIS closing,

Our society is becoming more diverse, and I feel that our library staffs should reflect our communities. If we cannot attract and educate more African Americans and other people of color in our profession, it will be a great tragedy for our country (Freightman, 2005, p. 10).

That CAU SLIS was located within an Historically Black Institution is important. There is much literature on the psychology of African-Americans’ choice to attending such an institution rather than a majority-White school. However, it is not the objective of this paper to discuss that. For whatever reason, more African-American librarians graduated from this institution than any other in the nation. Employers specifically sought minority librarians at CAU SLIS, and the school had goals and objectives related to the service of underrepresented populations unmatched by most other library programs. It is important to try to understand how its identity as an HBI affected CAU SLIS and thus, the impact of its loss on the profession.

### Historically Black Colleges/Universities

It is useful to take a closer look at the consequences of the closing in order to paint a broader picture of it—an addendum of one major aspect of its identity that made the school special.

Many respondents had strong opinions about HBCUs. Interview Question 5 (“Please describe any opinions you have on the future of Historically Black Colleges/Universities.”) was intentionally very broad and intended to induce the respondent to make any opinion or reference to this integral part of the school’s identity. Its predictive inquiry was meant to yield more useful information than a simple description of the current environment. The question was included to introduce the HBCU concept, but was not meant to become a leading question for those who may not have associated CAU SLIS with its HBI environment.

Some people bespoke general opinions on the value of HBIs. A past alum described them as having a “family type of environment,” and stated, “I think HBCUs... are crucial to educating African Americans... that choose to attend.” Another past alum opined, “People need that support; it’s important to our heritage.” One of the CAU administrators explained, “These institutions still provide opportunities for students to have unique experiences that they cannot get at a majority institution and this has to be recognized and embraced.” A third past alum chimed in,

I think there is still a need for an African-American to sit in a classroom and ... be around other African-Americans that are... just as intelligent and feel comfortable being able to say anything they want in a classroom without feeling judged, without feeling ostracized, without feeling like it’s political that they had to say something else. I think it’s a learning environment very different from any other.

Two respondents expressed the opposite opinion. The library association representative and one recent alum noted that Historically Black Institutions arose from a segregated society. Both felt that, though integration was admittedly not something accomplished right after the 1954 laws, American society was moving away from de facto segregation. The alum stated, “Now that integration has been in effect technically

since 1954, a lot of these schools will need to integrate more in the future.” Both expressed the belief that such racially separated schools would eventually die out, and one said:

My opinion is that they [HBCUs] are a group that has... an authoritative and powerful constituency that will maintain, but eventually as African-Americans ultimately blend into America... eventually they will become American colleges and universities ... the need will go away.

A CAU administrator was unwilling to state that the worth of CAU SLIS was solely tied up with its location in an HBI: “[Students] want...the Black Experience, and we are still trying to find that: what the Black Experience is. Learning is learning, education is education.”

Some participants praised the ability of a library school located in an HBI to produce librarians that would then go on to serve the African-American community. BCALA posted this on its website:

The School receives hundreds of requests each year to fill library positions and many of these requests specify minority librarians. It also claims to provide librarians for HBCUs, ones who ‘participate in programmatic activities for the enhancement of these libraries (BCALA, personal communication, 2/16/2004).’”

A past alum spoke to the need for young, diverse librarians to work at university libraries in particular. This interviewee’s theory was that students were more likely to speak with librarians who “look like them.”

Other respondents offered advice. Said one past alum, “For our HBCUs, we have to continue to maintain the standards of excellence that we have always done. If not, people look at us like we are just passing our own.” Still others were critical about some aspects of the current HBIs. One recent alum thought that its location in an HBI partially lead to SLIS’s demise:

I feel that you need some proper and qualified administration [in HBCUs], in several departments, especially the financial aid department... there needs to be better standards and procedures for how business is conducted in the different administrative departments, particularly financial aid and those that handle money, because I think that’s... the main problem that’s going on with accreditation being revoked from different schools... I think we need more qualified people to be in those administrative positions.

One CAU administrator mentioned, “Unfortunately in a Historically Black Institution, scholarship is not used the same way as in major institutions. The focus tends to be much, much more on image.” This person described HBI Board of Trustees members gaining their positions because of image and “family connections,” noting that people get on the Board,

who don’t have money necessarily to donate, but who have highly visible jobs. We focus on image: ‘Oh, he’s the Vice President of this, he’s the CEO of this’ but no money is being generated by that board member; and no interest really in the institution ... .

The respondent was inclined to believe that was not always the case in White institutions: “I doubt seriously that those folks don’t generate some level of support, if not from their own resources, from their organizations, or some effort to fundraise for the institution; and I didn’t see that happening at Clark Atlanta.”

Financial difficulties were often mentioned not only in talking about CAU and CAU SLIS, but also HBIs in general. Referring to financial issues, a recent alum stated:

I don’t know what has happened the past few years, but the Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been doing some things that have been hurting them, and it’s going to continue unless someone steps up and says ‘Hey, this can no longer happen.’

In a letter to the CAU Board of Trustees and posted on the BCALA website, the Alumni acknowledge this fact by writing, “We are particularly aware of the dire economic realities challenging most Historically Black Colleges and Universities” (ACAUSLIS, personal communication, 1/14/2005).

As for predictions for HBCUs, a recent alum declared:

In my opinion, at the rate that things are going, there will be Historically Black colleges and universities in the future, just not as many. And, their role will be more significant than it is now, because of the attitudes and the difficulties, different things that are going on within the economy.

A CAU administrator thought, “HBCUs will have to ensure that they are changing or adjusting their curriculum so that they are offering what is necessary to meet the needs that are out there.” And a past alum noted:

I think they will sustain, I think they’re still necessary. I think we might not have as many as we used to. I think that in some places, like [already happened in]

North Carolina or Alabama, I think the state will continue to try to keep them or maintain them, or take them over... .

In another reference to the financial aspects of keeping schools open, the CAU administrator stated: “I think that the future of HBCUs will be dependent upon whether or not they are able to garner the resources that will be necessary to provide the kinds of programs that are needed.” And a recent alum also predicted that survival would depend upon finances, saying of HBIs, “I think that the private ones that are better-funded will probably remain the way they are now.”

The issue of public versus private funding is another that threads throughout various aspects of the CAU SLIS closing. The library school got its start solely through private funding, and CAU was the only privately-funded HBI with a library program in the country. Yet the school received over half of its budget from state funds. Again tying CAU SLIS’s closing back to budgetary issues, a CAU administrator declared:

Clark Atlanta is a private institution and I believe now an undergraduate is paying close to \$24,000 a year to go to Clark Atlanta, basically. When the reality is, why wouldn’t you go to Georgia State, or one of the other Historically Black state schools, or any other school where the tuition is significantly less?

An argument made by a few participants (and the administrator’s answer to the above question) was that CAU, and HBIs in general, should not cut out the programs which serve to distinguish them. This theme was mentioned to describe the magnitude of the loss associated with Clark Atlanta University losing its library education program. It was also referred to as being detrimental to what any HBI should be doing in order to survive these days. In the words of the same CAU administrator,

One has to wonder if our uniqueness was not enough to set us apart from those other institutions... we have provided this profession with a tremendous amount of individuals who went out into just about every aspect of the profession and made many contributions. To my mind, that should have been enough to at least warrant us not necessarily closing—downsizing, becoming a department in the School of Education or of Arts and Sciences. But it seems as if no one took time to look at the contributions. It’s all about money.

Continuing on the theme of HBIs providing unique education, a recent alum asserted that “Clark Atlanta will more than likely be the next on the chopping block simply because of

the decline of students, because they are closing prominent programs.” A past alum elaborated on this concept:

I think there is a lot of value in the type of education that they provide. And if you look at the most successful Historically Black colleges and universities, those are institutions that have been able to find a particular strength, and maximize it and market it, and work it to their advantage. I think that’s going to be the challenge for Historically Black colleges and universities and those who are unable to do that, such as we’ve seen in the case of Morris Brown College<sup>5</sup>, *will not survive* [italics added]. I think there is still a lot of value in the type of education that they provide, but unless they’re willing to adapt, change, and really focus on just a few key, strong, areas, then I think we will probably lose more historically black colleges and universities in the future.

Summarizing both the future of HBCUs and the ultimate reasons for CAU SLIS’s closure, this past alum expressed an opinion that the library school’s status as an HBI both helped and hurt it in the end:

I think that the library school at Clark Atlanta was very unique in its founding and in the students that it educated, and in the professors and the dean, in that it was a Historically Black Institution, and I think even in the year 2005, there is still a lot of segregation within the library profession, and there is a lot of isolation, particularly I would say, within the state of Georgia. So perhaps that may have influenced the relationship-building that the school was able to do, and just the ability to draw others in who were not African-American, and did not come from the Historically Black college and university background... . My perception, there was a little distance there between Clark Atlanta and the rest of the library education community.

It is apparent from the synopsis history of CAU SLIS, that the school was founded primarily as African-American institution, though its identity as a Southern library school was always tied into this fact. Its location, function, and makeup was a holistic package, all of which created a program integral and necessary to the profession.



## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

This research should serve as broad, preliminary examination of the issues the school and its students were dealing with due to Clark Atlanta's decision. The results of such a study as this are difficult to categorize. Paris discussed the several ways that case study findings achieve reliability and validity. Reliability was not a goal in this study, because such a specific topic will not require replication. Validity is a contested subject in this type of research because it is so subjective. Grounded theory contends that any information is important and valid in its own right, as a jumping-off point for new theories and research (Babbie, 2004, p. 55).

Analyzing these facts and opinions about why the library closed, in relation to scholarly thought on why the university made this decision, is useful. Ultimately, many of the reasons Paris found to affect a library school's closing were also applicable to CAU SLIS. The financial aspect was of course the most prevalent. Though Paris attempts to bring out the other factors involved in library school closings, she does not deny the valid issue of money. In both studies there was contention about actual budget numbers and how they should be interpreted. There were determinations of the quality of the programs, and the monetary worth to the university. With both Paris' subjects and CAU SLIS, the location and some special, intrinsic values were examined in relation to the environment and the profession.

In some important aspects, this study did not produce the same results as those in the past. For example, Paris discussed a belief (not validated by her research, either) during that time that library school programs are cut because of their "female-centered and low status constituencies" (Paris, 1986, p. 141). CAU SLIS was part of a group of programs being cut, one of which was an engineering program. Engineering programs are known generally for having a lack, rather than an abundance, of females. General knowledge does not at all describe a low status to the profession. And, in Paris' study, isolation of the school was major threatening factor. However, barring the unstudied (in

this paper) relationship of CAU SLIS to the AUC, isolation was not a problem. This issue was not mentioned in any way by respondents, and news articles and various documents to leadership demonstrated that this was not the case at CAU SLIS.

One of Paris' conclusions that did fit is related to perhaps the most valid discovery in this research. Paris found a "fundamental lack of understanding and communication between and among the library educators and their university managers" (Paris, 1986, p. 140). She spoke of the "low credibility" (Paris, 1986, p. 142) of the library school leadership in university administrator's eyes. These conclusions all relate to poor communication and a lack of knowledge of the profession by the university administration. Such a theme is also present in the CAU SLIS event. Throughout the event, there was evidence of general ignorance, strong mistrust, unintentional miscommunication, and intentional "spin." From the confusion of the alumni to the widespread distrust of administrative words, communication remained the hot topic for almost everyone, including academic and news sources. In fact, this theme has appeared throughout the history of CAU SLIS. From the survey that the American Library Association commissioned, which showed an expressed need for African-American librarians, to the miscommunication between university leadership and the CAU Board, verbal and written contact has been shown to hold important consequences. The research illustrated the results of several relationships with poor communication from that between the university and SLIS leadership (not to mention the non-communication between ALA leadership and the university administration), to the perception of opacity in the contact between SLIS students and administration.

This theme is one which can be studied in future research, not with the dubious end of making library school closings more efficient but perhaps with the goal of creating better lines of communication within an educational institution. It would be useful to determine the best way of to advertise and connect the library school to the wider university, the community, local associations, alumni, and other faculty and students. In fact, Koenig, in his 1990 work discussing how to prevent library school closings, stated that librarians need to,

undertake a pro-active campaign to articulate the importance of education for library and information professionals and research about library and information science in this increasingly information-dependent age. The explanation of what

happened and why is necessary, but it is only a stopgap measure. Articulating the importance of the field will in the long run be the far more important response (Koenig, 1990, p. 724).

It is important to note that neither Paris' model nor any other models or theories were actually tested during this research. As previously stated, the results consist solely of data gathered from different sources, the most important being actors within or with close connections to the event itself. The library school closing models were used to organize these valuable data. Keeping this in mind, it is significant that many themes from Paris' study twenty years ago were similar to those discussed by participants in the current study.

The purpose of this study was not solely to determine the causes of this program's demise. Such an objective would require many more participant groups, more in-depth interview questions, much more quantitative data collection, primary document access, and research into the larger university, among other things. There are actually several ways in which the study could have been broadened and deepened. The researcher was not in the same city as the study subject. Thus, an immense wealth of both human and paper resources could not be consulted. People could have been met with in person, the site could have been examined, and perhaps most importantly, the precious archives and records of the school could have been combed through. This is sure to be done by another researcher in the future. Similarly, there were hundreds of emails, listserv messages, websites, personal documents and an extremely wide range of other materials that are available for analysis but were simply not added to the study because of time, priority level, and efficiency.

There were some insightful speculation on how this particular closing would affect the world of librarianship. It had a lot to do specifically with training and educating underrepresented minorities in the profession. The obvious way to continue this type of research is to examine North Carolina Central University School of Library & Information Science. Such a study might also contribute research to any possible correlation between housing unique programs and survival in Historically Black Institutions. Of course, the best way to continue scholarship in this area is to establish another library school in an HBI. Perhaps that day will come soon.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, this is the opposite theme from that which currently haunts many library schools. Today, library educators must work to prove to parent institutions the worth of library scholarship as academic research, as shown by Paris' study. She writes of Emory's closing, "... Emory University officials all but declared that a library school had no place in a research university" (Paris, 1991, p. 261). Paris also says this was the general idea in the closures of Case Western Reserve University in 1984, the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1988 and the School of Library Service at Columbia University in 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Thomas W. Cole Jr. (1988-2002) served as the president of both Atlanta University and Clark College before they merged, and afterwards.

<sup>3</sup> Valdosta State University now has precandidacy status with the Committee on Accreditation. According to the Valdosta State University website, the comprehensive review for the VSU MLIS Program is scheduled for February 2007. The decision is expected in July 2007.

<sup>4</sup> This interviewee's mention of school librarianship is apt because of the fact that several people in this study distinguished the profession of school librarianship as being one more common and easier to access. This may be because both Georgia State and Valdosta State have certification programs (not ALA-accredited) for school librarianship. A past alum stated:

That's a disadvantage because those programs only have school programs, which is not a complete part of the education. That is without the benefit of [possibly developing] the full desire to expand into other librarianships, such as law, public, whatever.

<sup>5</sup> Morris Brown College, one of the institutions which made up the Atlanta University Center. Morris Brown College, part of the Atlanta University Center, lost its accreditation in 2003 due to financial insolvency.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview

1. What is your opinion on why the Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies closed?
2. Do you think anything should have been done differently by yourself or anyone else? If so, what?
3. What is your perception of the circumstances surrounding the closing?
4. What do you perceive as some of the consequences of the closing?
5. Please describe any opinions you have on the future of Historically Black Colleges/Universities.
6. Do you think this particular library school closing was different than any other you know about or heard of? Why?

Specific questions directed towards individuals groups:

- School administration: Do you know of any future plans to reinstate the school?
- Alumni: What effects, if any, have you experienced related to the closing of the school? Do you anticipate others?
- Library association representative: What did the Association do as a result of the closing?