An inquiry: the Valda Maeda case

By Bruce S. Schwartz

On Wednesday, January 5, Valda Maeda, Slide Librarian at Rotch Library, was dismissed in an open hearing. This was less than five days after the University's presidential committee had recommended that the dismissal be rescinded.

Benjamin Snyder, Dean for Institute Relations, responded to demands for reinstatement and/or an open hearing by initiating two administrative investigations of the affair. The first, conducted by an Opportunity Development Officer James Allen, was quickly dropped because the case did not fit neatly into the categories of racial or sexual discrimination. A second investigation was made by William Porter, Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning.

The demonstrators followed and were about to charge en masse into his office when Kevin Lynch, whose office is in the same suite as Susskind's, invited them in to talk. Lynch and Valda traded markedly conflicting viewpoints on the situation. Among other things, Lynch asserted that Valda had been uncooperative in accepting slides he wanted in the Rotch collection. Valda's version was that she had not adequately communicated to him her desire that the slides in question be returned. So it went, with several members of the crowd being interrupted by Wiesner, who did his best to maintain an unruffled composure. Culliton installed himself in Ms. Maeda's office and asked her to make the complaints public, he said. Valda, with Maeda herself, was not allowed to see specific charges against Valda, or the administration to handle the issue. An ironic twist to the Rotch affair at this time was that SDS-UAG became involved in the controversy. SDS-UAG, which had been saying that there was full justification for the termination, as had been recommended by the Rotch Library committee, was afterwards recommended by the Rotch committee. SDS-UAG leaflets are not known for their politeness, often bizarre, but one of its leaflets this time was printed, I believe, in part by the slide librarians.

Over several days, twenty or so demonstrators called on one another of the principals in Valda's firing. The usual result was a shouted confrontation, often physical, followed by a bombastic statement, often of the 'I'm closing the slide room' variety.

Mrs. Freve,ilsoness to her. She would not. make public the specific charges against Valda, or to grant an open hearing. Valda herself was not allowed to see the complaints against her until February 1, when Kevin Lynch, 'confronted' her at his office, agreed to release Susskind's letter to her.

Until now, all that has appeared in print concerning the firing of Valda Maeda has been partisan in nature. SDS/UAG leaflets are not known for their politeness. Lynch and Valda traded markedly conflicting viewpoints on the situation. Among other things, Lynch asserted that Valda had been uncooperative in accepting slides he wanted in the Rotch collection. Valda's version was that she had not adequately communicated to him her desire that the slides in question be returned. So it went, with several members of the crowd being interrupted by Wiesner, who did his best to maintain an unruffled composure. Culliton installed himself in Ms. Maeda's office and asked her to make the complaints public, he said. Valda, with Maeda herself, was not allowed to see specific charges against Valda, or the administration to handle the issue. An ironic twist to the Rotch affair at this time was that SDS-UAG became involved in the controversy. SDS-UAG leaflets are not known for their politeness, often bizarre, but one of its leaflets this time was printed, I believe, in part by the slide librarians.

The main point is that the administration was not disturbed. Though Wiesner made a final decision that the complaints were without basis, it was not immediately clear that the administration would consider complaints over discrimination.

There matters stand at this time. The administrative committee's decision could not be appealed unless the parties agreed to release Susskind's letter to Valda. Lynch and Valda traded marked confli-

get-acquainted night — Wednesday, February 9 — free pizza and ookes