The crop improvement activities of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) encompass the complete range of genetic resources activities from acquisition to multidisciplinary evaluation, utilization, and long-term preservation. Thus, IRRI's role fulfills the Vavilovian concept of a plant genetic resources center (cf. Frankel, 1975), but its research programs are specific to rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) and rice-based farming systems. Orientation toward a single crop enables IRRI to focus on the basic needs of the crop, to effectively implement well-defined research objectives, and to perform a broad spectrum of services to rice researchers of the world (Chang et al., 1975a). On the other hand, the enormous genetic diversity existing in the genus *Oryza* (cf. Chang, 1976a, 1976b; Chang et al., 1982) has also presented unique challenges to both conservationists and the users.

In the face of continuous population increases in the major rice-consuming countries of Asia and Latin America, rice scientists will depend more and more on the available genetic resources to raise production levels and to stabilize crop yield. The demand for rice is continuously...