

Appendix 6

What is RSS?

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. It is one of many ways (Table 1) to distribute and keep track of information on the Internet.

Without RSS, you have to manually visit websites (Figure 1) to determine what is new or have updates sent to your email inbox. Having to manually visit websites puts the work on the user, can get time consuming with many websites, and ultimately you never know when a site has new information. Further, email updates can add to one's already over-full inbox and get confusing.

With RSS (Figure 2), when you "subscribe" to the updated information, your RSS Reader (the application used for subscribing and reading the latest updates) periodically "fetches" the new information. When you return to your RSS Reader (on your own time), you are presented the latest updates to *all* the sites that you are subscribing to.

It's like subscribing to a magazine that is delivered to you, with your mail box being your "RSS Reader". But instead of receiving the whole magazine periodically when it is published, you receive new articles as they are written. And, you can even subscribe to only a "section" of the magazine instead of the whole publication.

How RSS applies to Real Estate Information?

As discussed, RSS is just another distribution method (Figure 3) of the data that is already being generated on the web and via email/txt notifications. A user can subscribe to various types of information, such as New Listings, Neighborhood News (blogs), and Housing Search Matches (IDX/VOW data).

For example, a consumer can create a custom search based on parameters (bed, bath, zip code, etc) and subscribe to listings that match these criteria, similar to a saved search or email alert. These updates will show up in your RSS as new listings enter the market.

Methods of search and subscribe

Table 1

	Identification (minimal needed)	Custom Search	Subscription	Additional Advertisement
Website	None	Yes	No	Yes
Saved Searches	Email Address	Yes	N/A	Yes
Email	Email address	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cell Phone TXT Message	Cell Number	Yes	Yes	Yes
RSS	None	Yes	Yes	Yes
Twitter/Facebook	None	No	Yes	Yes

Identification – The level of identification is required in order to perform each type of search/subscription. A site operator (broker) could require full registration to provide any of these services (ie login for IDX), but this outlines the bare minimal identity disclosure needed to communicate.

Custom Search – Can the search type be customized to allow the consumer to specifically identify the attributes they are looking for (area, bed/bath, school, etc) or does the broker have full control of what information goes out? The ability for custom search depends on the functionality of each distribution method as implemented by the site operator (broker). They could, for example, create a website that only displays new listings or provide an email of price reductions. Both of which meet no specific search criteria.

Subscription – Can the information be subscribed to? The only one that doesn't fall into this category is website, as users do need to return each time. However, the concept of "saved searches" allows the user to identify the search criteria that can then be pushed out via the other delivery/subscription mechanisms. In essence, the delivery/subscription mechanism is just the method of getting the same data distributed over various types of channels.

Additional Advertisements – Can the broker provide additional advertising to the consumer, such as mortgage, home improvement, etc? These can be in the form of banners, resource links, inline descriptions within the email/RSS alerts or short taglines in txt messages.

WEB

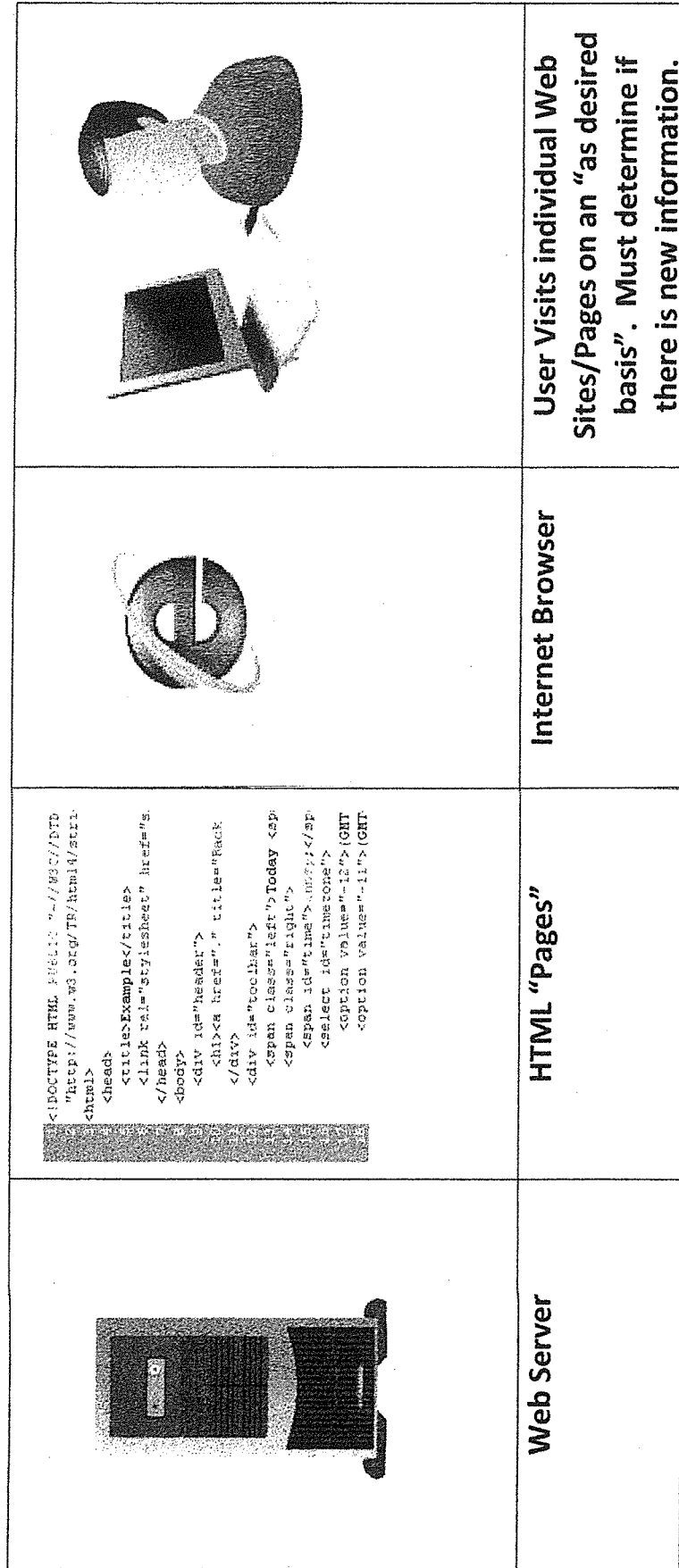


Figure 1: Browsing via the Web

RSS

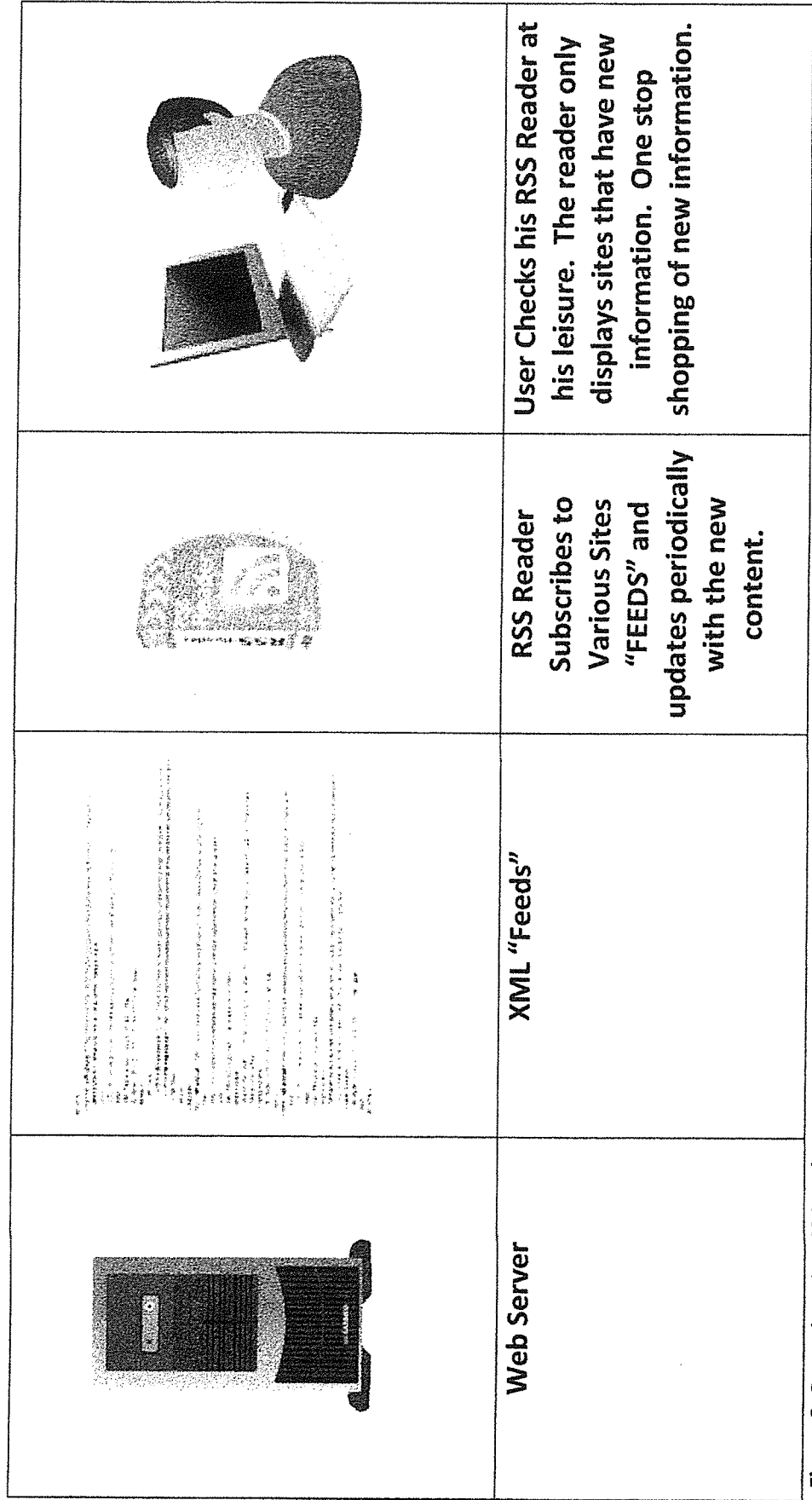


Figure 2: Browsing via RSS Reader

Search and Deliver

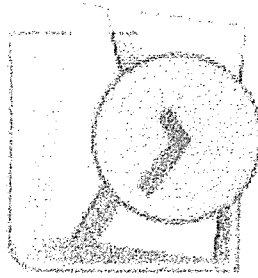
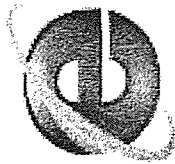
A screenshot of a property search form. The form is divided into several sections: 'PROPERTIES' with a 'LOCATION' field for 'City, State or Zip' and a 'SEARCH' button; 'PRICE & SIZE' with a 'Price Range' slider (from \$123,000 to \$275,000) and a 'Square Ft.' field (1250); 'FEATURES' with a '# Bedrooms' field (4) and a '# Baths' field (3); and a 'SCHOOL' field. There are also 'MIN' and 'MAX' labels for the price and square foot fields.

Figure 3: Data Distribution Methods

When consumers go to an IDX site, they can choose the method they want to read the results of their search.

- Web Page
- Email Notification
- RSS Subscription

RSS versus Websites

Similarities:

- The data used is the same data being delivered by Broker's IDX server
- RSS is subscribed to while websites are bookmarked.

Differences:

- Data is formatted differently; HTML for Web-Browser versus XML for the RSS Reader
- Web browsing requires the user to go to individual sites, regardless if content has changed versus using an RSS Reader, the user gets new content from all sites in a timely fashion in one place.

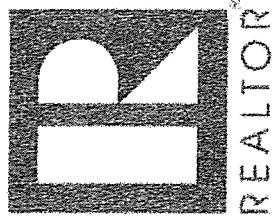
Comparing the WEB to RSS:

The WEB is if you had to call each of your friends to find out if they have new information to share with you. RSS is if your friends call your secretary only when they have updates, and you check in with her at your convenience.

RSS saves time, and is the same information - just delivered differently and more efficiently.

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