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(54) **METHODS FOR USING THE ADDRESSING, PROTOCOLS AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF EMAIL TO SUPPORT NEAR REAL-TIME COMMUNICATION**

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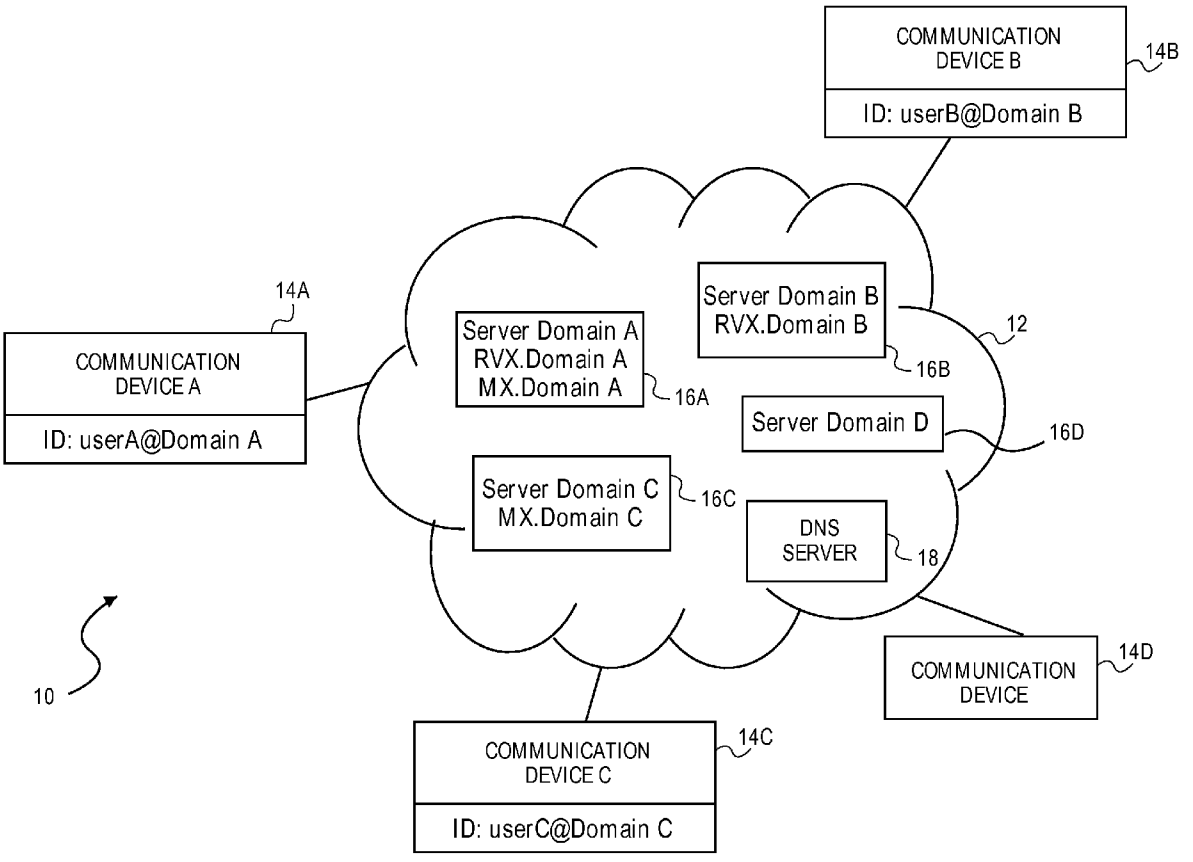
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method of implementing late binding of time-based media that can be rendered in near real-time by a recipient when transmitted over a communication network. The method involves addressing a message to a recipient using an address associated with the recipient and progressively creating time-based media associated with the message. When the address of the recipient is defined, the method uses the address to define an active delivery route for the delivery of time-based media associated with the message in near real-time to the recipient. When the active delivery route is discovered and is available, the method further involves progressively and simultaneously transmitting to the recipient the created time-based media associated with the message as the time-based media is being created.



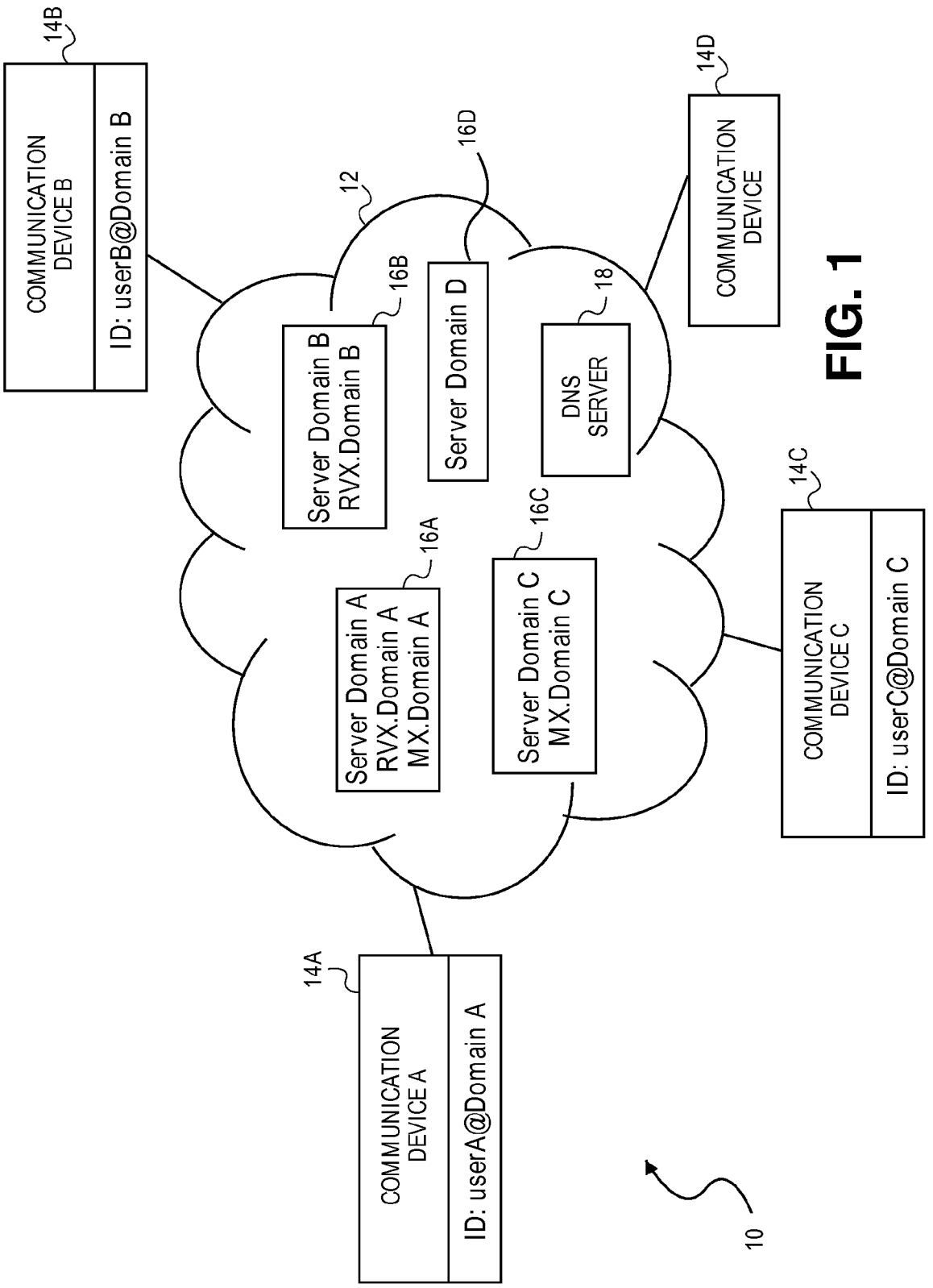

14B
COMMUNICATION DEVICE B
ID: userB@Domain B
12
16D
14D
COMMUNICATION DEVICE
16B
Server Domain B RVX.Domain B
Server Domain D
18
DNS SERVER
16A
16C
14C
Server Domain A RVX.Domain A MX.Domain A
Server Domain C MX.Domain C
COMMUNICATION DEVICE C
ID: userC@Domain C
14A
COMMUNICATION DEVICE A
ID: userA@Domain A
10

FIG. 1

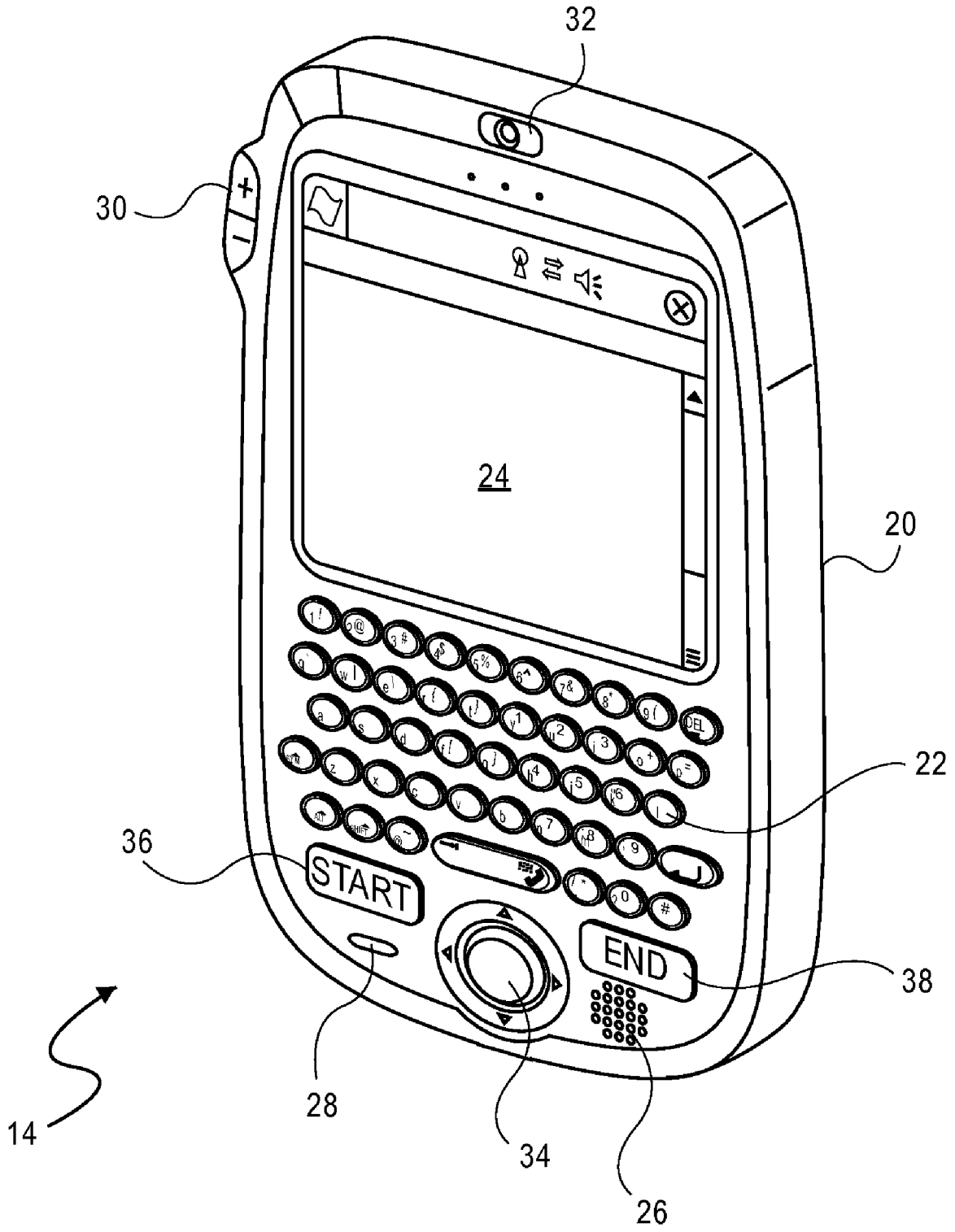


FIG. 2

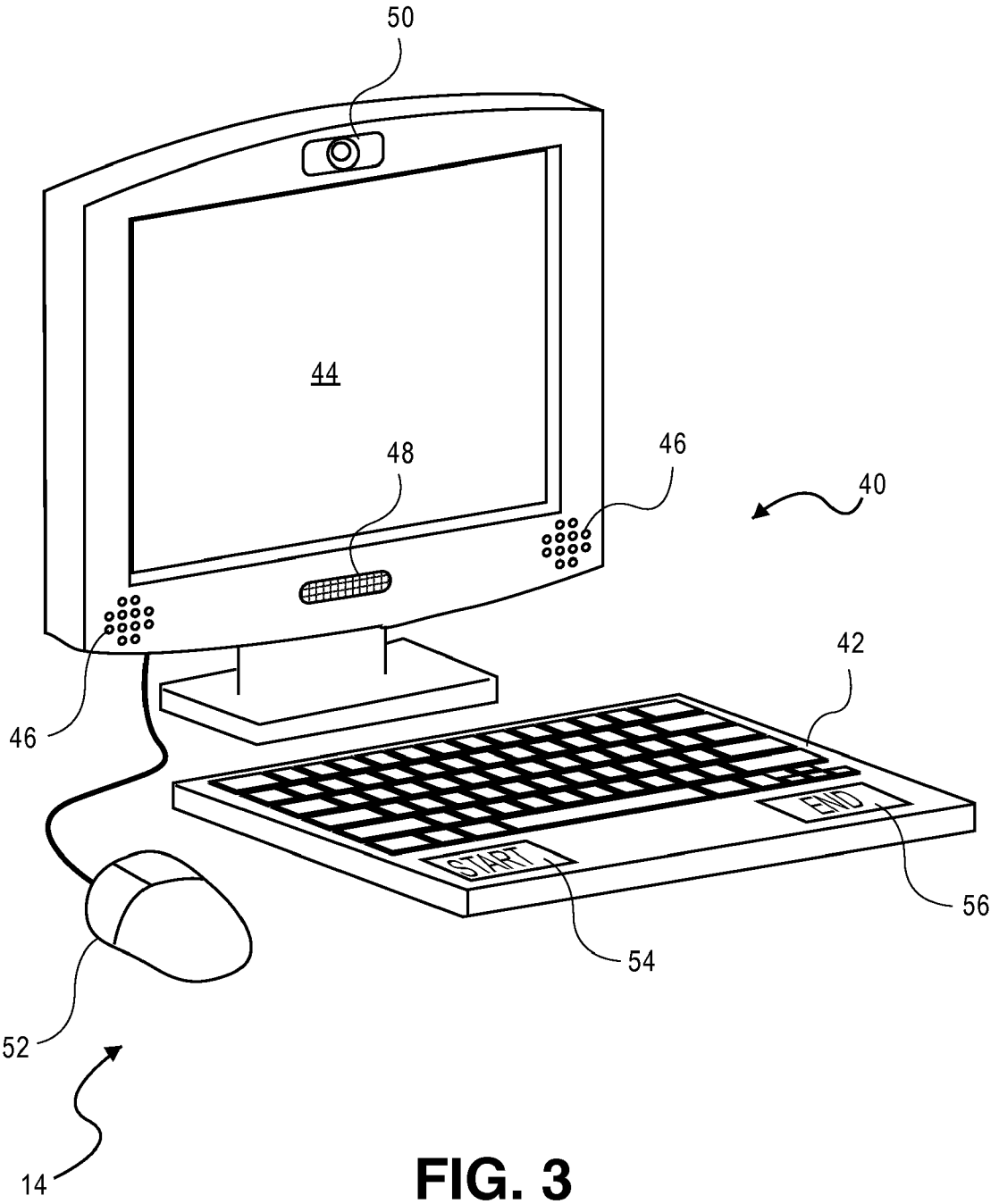


FIG. 3

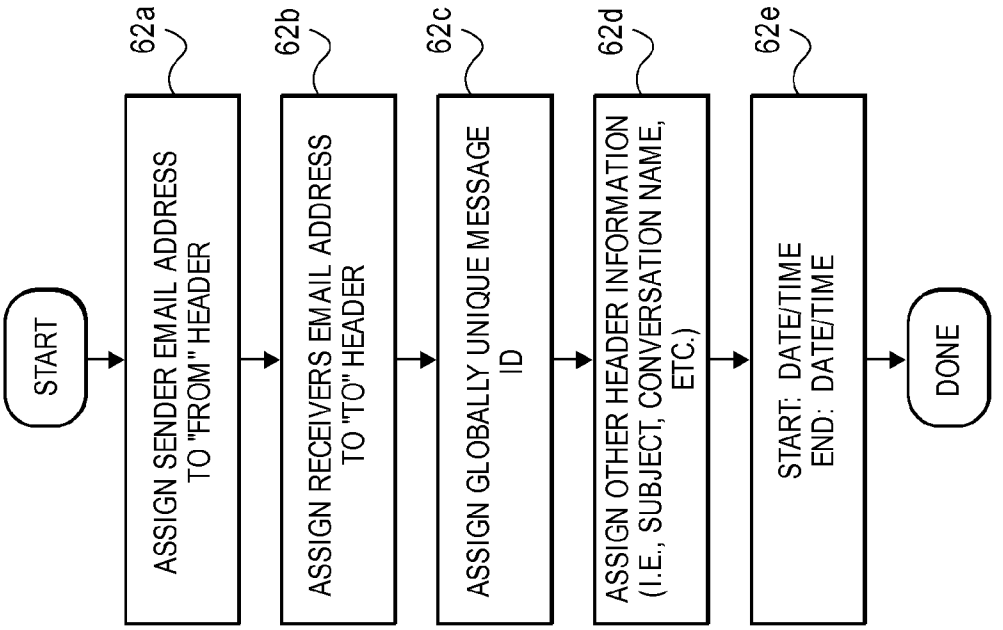

START
62a
ASSIGN SENDER EMAIL ADDRESS TO "FROM" HEADER
62b
ASSIGN RECEIVERS EMAIL ADDRESS TO "TO" HEADER
62c
ASSIGN GLOBALLY UNIQUE MESSAGE ID
62d
ASSIGN OTHER HEADER INFORMATION (I.E., SUBJECT, CONVERSATION NAME, ETC.)
62e
START: DATE/TIME
END: DATE/TIME
DONE

FIG. 4B

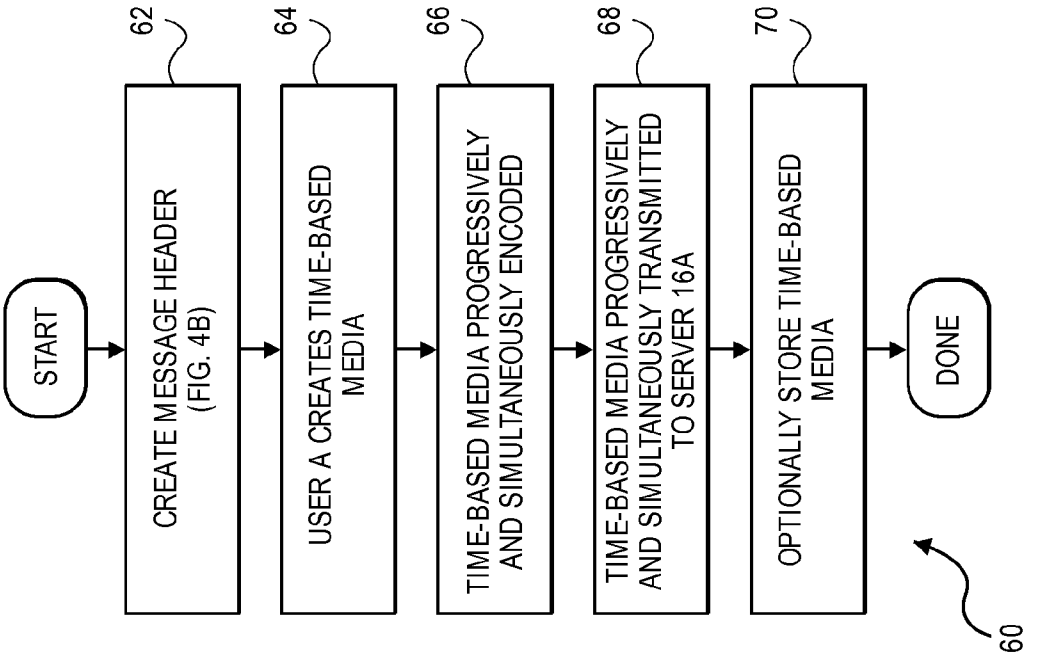

START
62
CREATE MESSAGE HEADER (FIG. 4B)
64
USER A CREATES TIME-BASED MEDIA
66
TIME-BASED MEDIA PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY ENCODED
68
TIME-BASED MEDIA PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRANSMITTED TO SERVER 16A
70
OPTIONALLY STORE TIME-BASED MEDIA
DONE
60

FIG. 4A

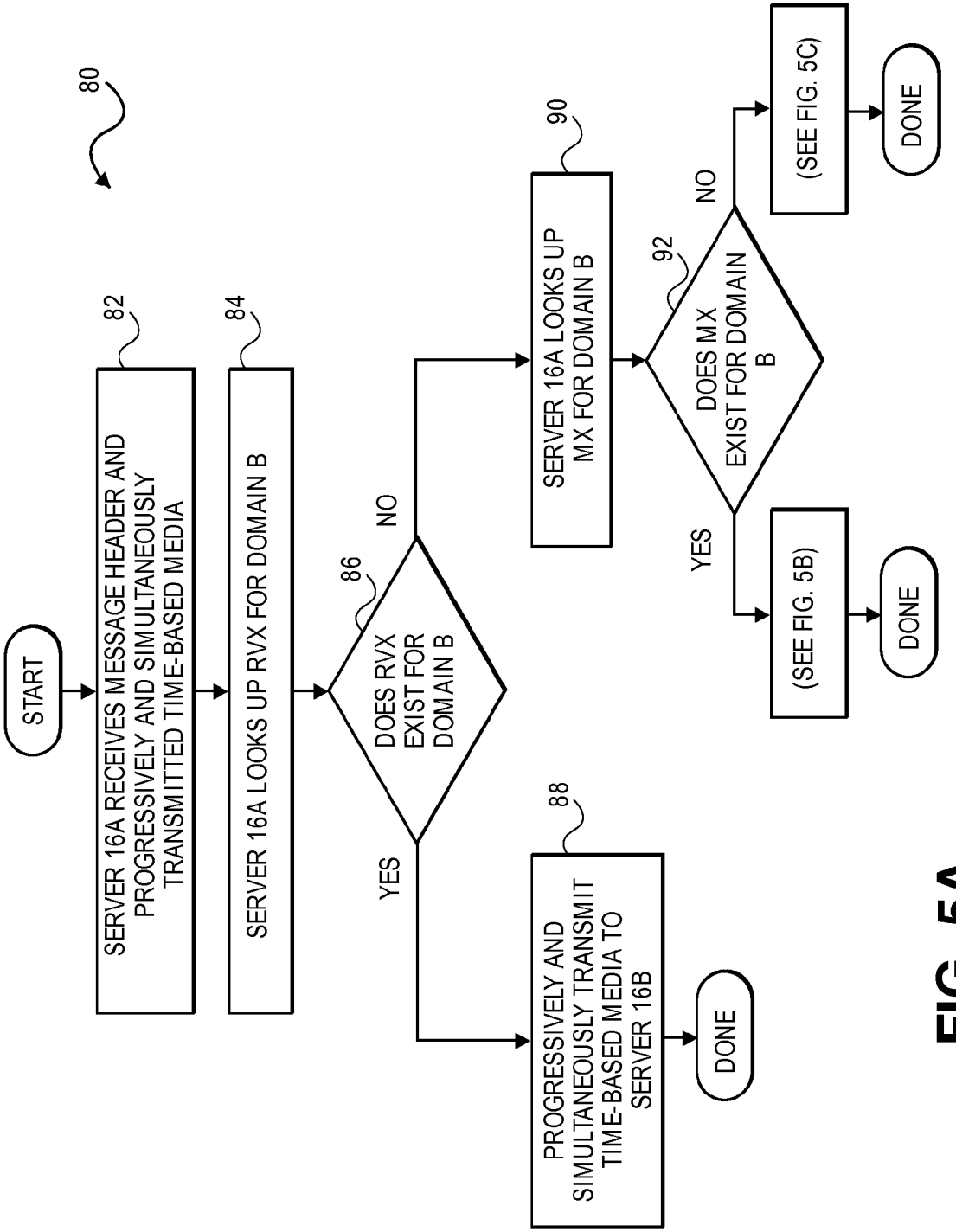

80
START
SERVER 16A RECEIVES MESSAGE HEADER AND PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRANSMITTED TIME-BASED MEDIA
82
SERVER 16A LOOKS UP RVX FOR DOMAIN B
84
DOES RVX EXIST FOR DOMAIN B
86
YES
NO
PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRANSMIT TIME-BASED MEDIA TO SERVER 16B
88
DONE
SERVER 16A LOOKS UP MX FOR DOMAIN B
90
DOES MX EXIST FOR DOMAIN B
92
YES
NO
(SEE FIG. 5B)
DONE
(SEE FIG. 5C)
DONE

FIG. 5A

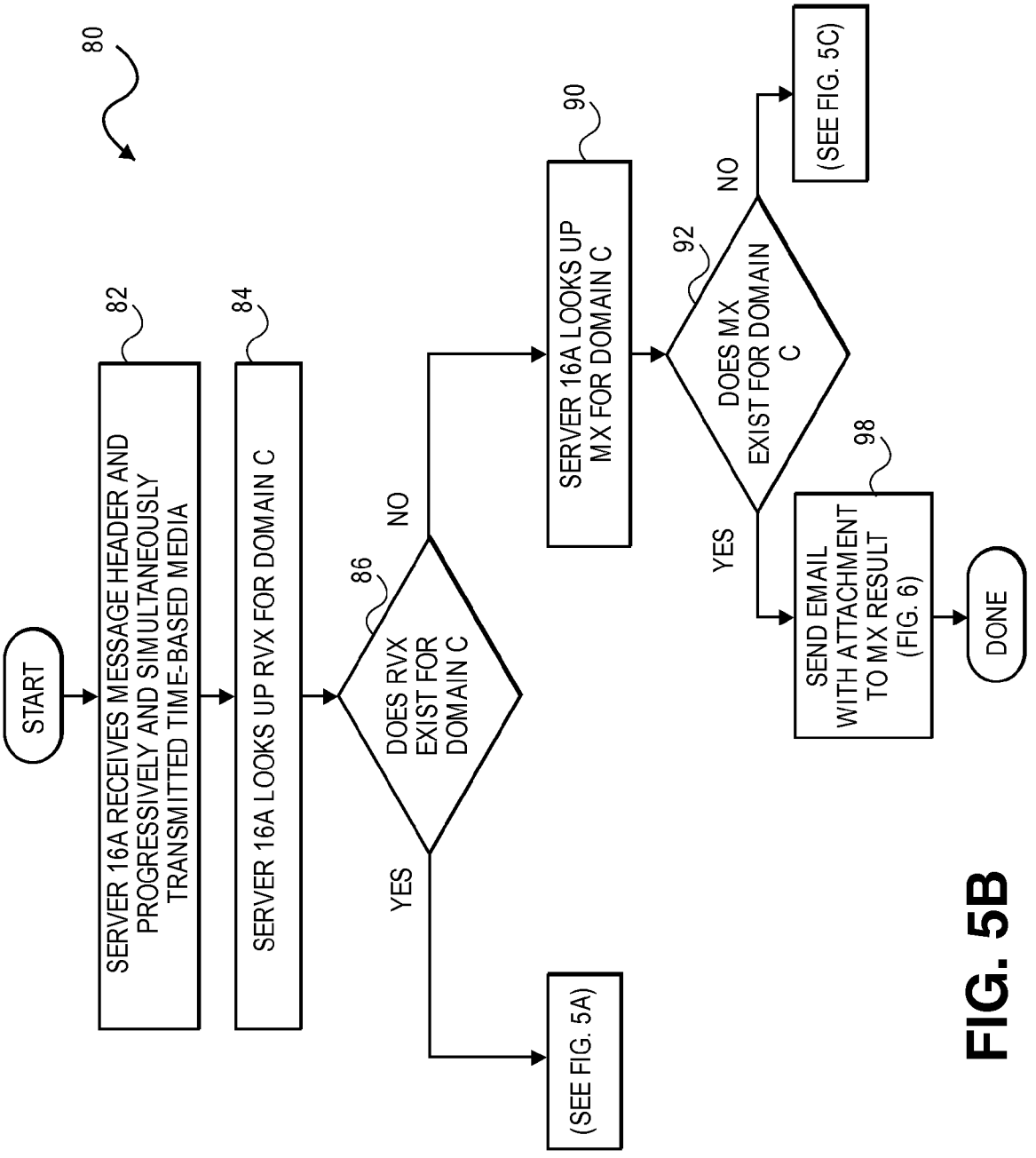

80
START
SERVER 16A RECEIVES MESSAGE HEADER AND PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRANSMITTED TIME-BASED MEDIA
82
SERVER 16A LOOKS UP RVX FOR DOMAIN C
84
DOES RVX EXIST FOR DOMAIN C
86
YES
NO
(SEE FIG. 5A)
SERVER 16A LOOKS UP MX FOR DOMAIN C
90
DOES MX EXIST FOR DOMAIN C
92
YES
NO
(SEE FIG. 5C)
SEND EMAIL WITH ATTACHMENT TO MX RESULT (FIG. 6)
98
DONE

FIG. 5B

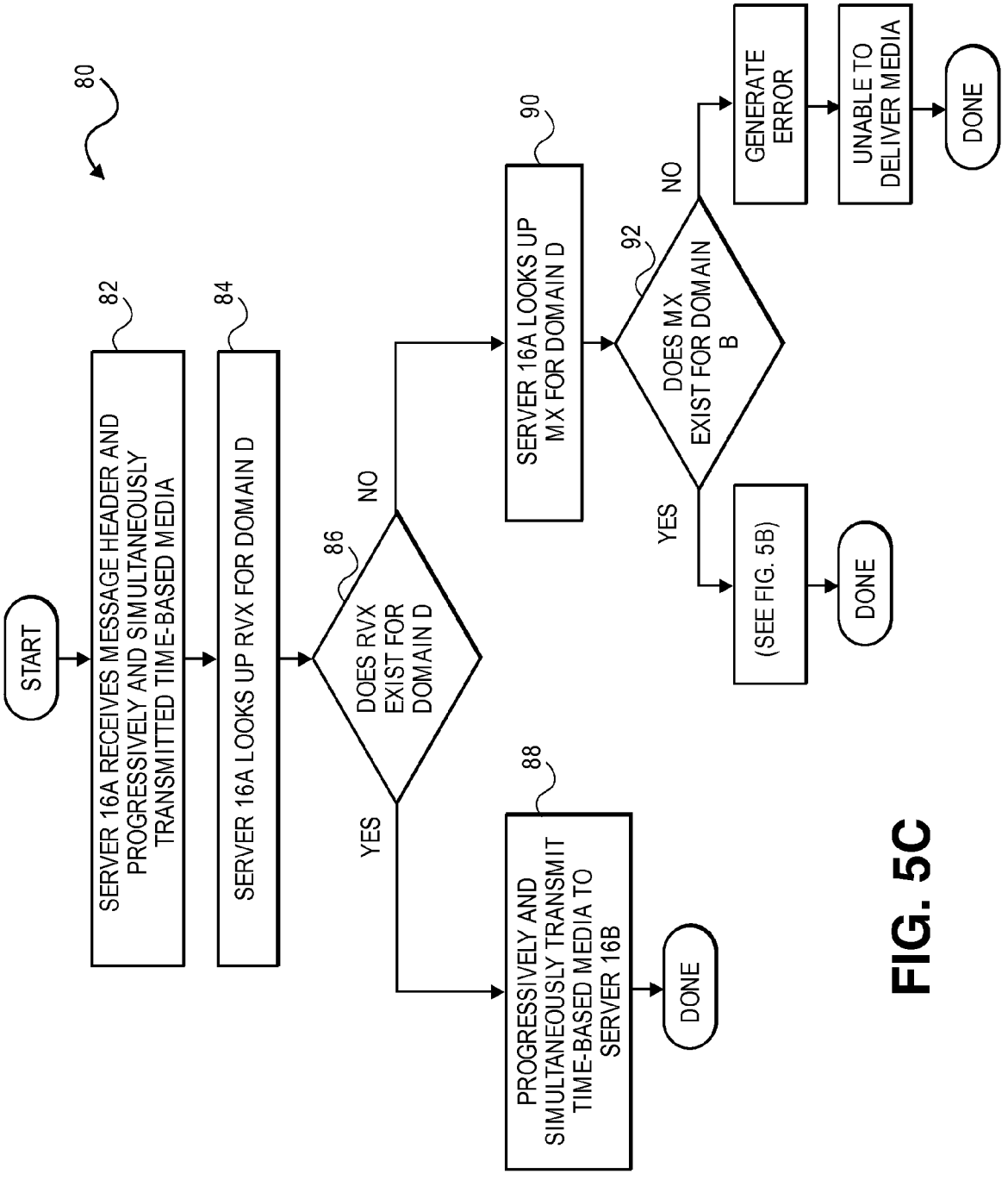

80
START
SERVER 16A RECEIVES MESSAGE HEADER AND PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRANSMITTED TIME-BASED MEDIA
82
SERVER 16A LOOKS UP RVX FOR DOMAIN D
84
DOES RVX EXIST FOR DOMAIN D
86
YES
NO
PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRANSMIT TIME-BASED MEDIA TO SERVER 16B
88
DONE
SERVER 16A LOOKS UP MX FOR DOMAIN D
90
DOES MX EXIST FOR DOMAIN B
92
YES
NO
(SEE FIG. 5B)
DONE
GENERATE ERROR
UNABLE TO DELIVER MEDIA
DONE

FIG. 5C

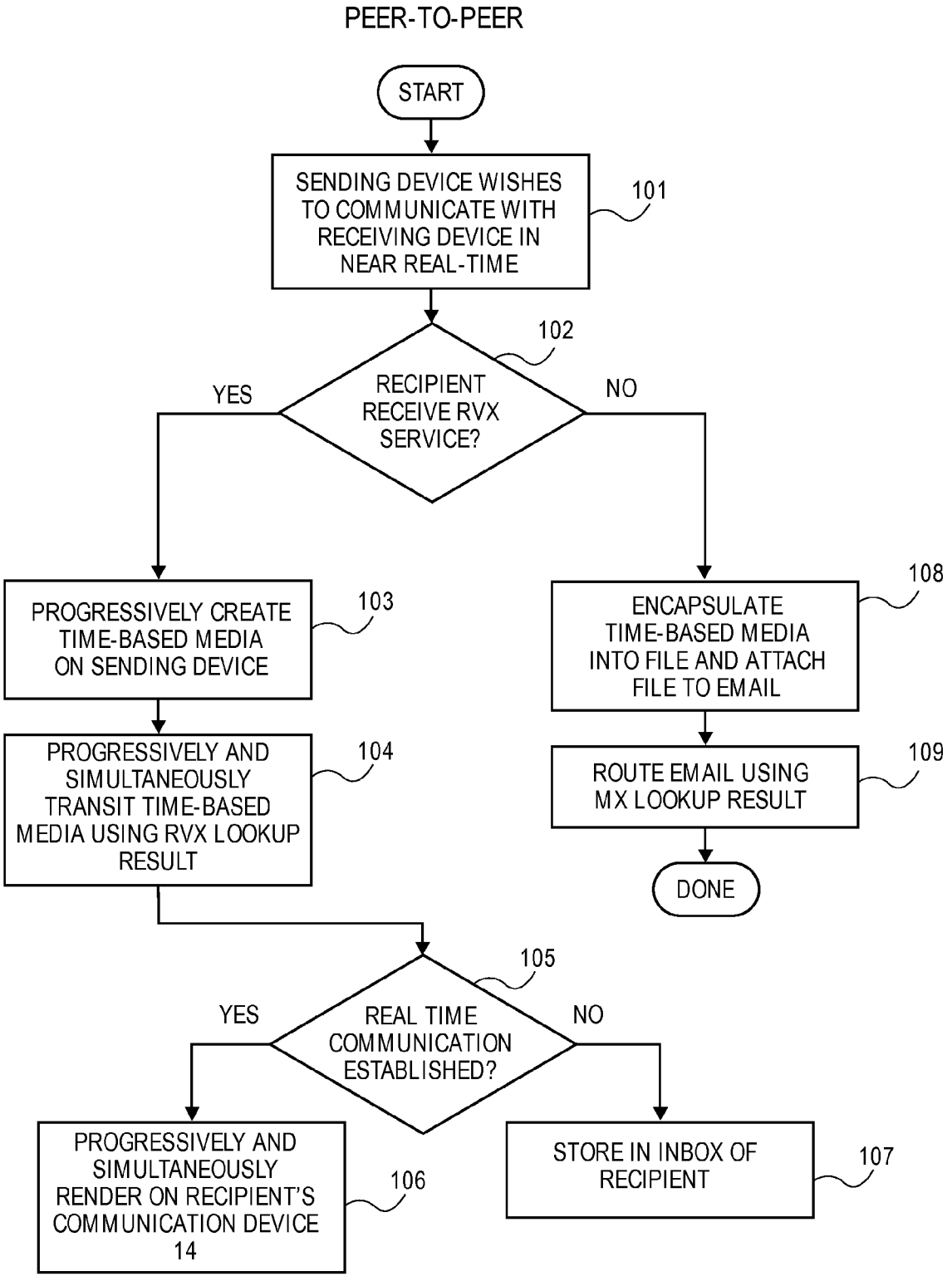

PEER-TO-PEER
START
SENDING DEVICE WISHES TO COMMUNICATE WITH RECEIVING DEVICE IN NEAR REAL-TIME
101
RECIPIENT RECEIVE RVX SERVICE?
102
YES
NO
PROGRESSIVELY CREATE TIME-BASED MEDIA ON SENDING DEVICE
103
PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TRANSIT TIME-BASED MEDIA USING RVX LOOKUP RESULT
104
ENCAPSULATE TIME-BASED MEDIA INTO FILE AND ATTACH FILE TO EMAIL
108
ROUTE EMAIL USING MX LOOKUP RESULT
109
DONE
REAL TIME COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHED?
105
YES
NO
PROGRESSIVELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY RENDER ON RECIPIENT'S COMMUNICATION DEVICE 14
106
STORE IN INBOX OF RECIPIENT
107

FIG. 5D

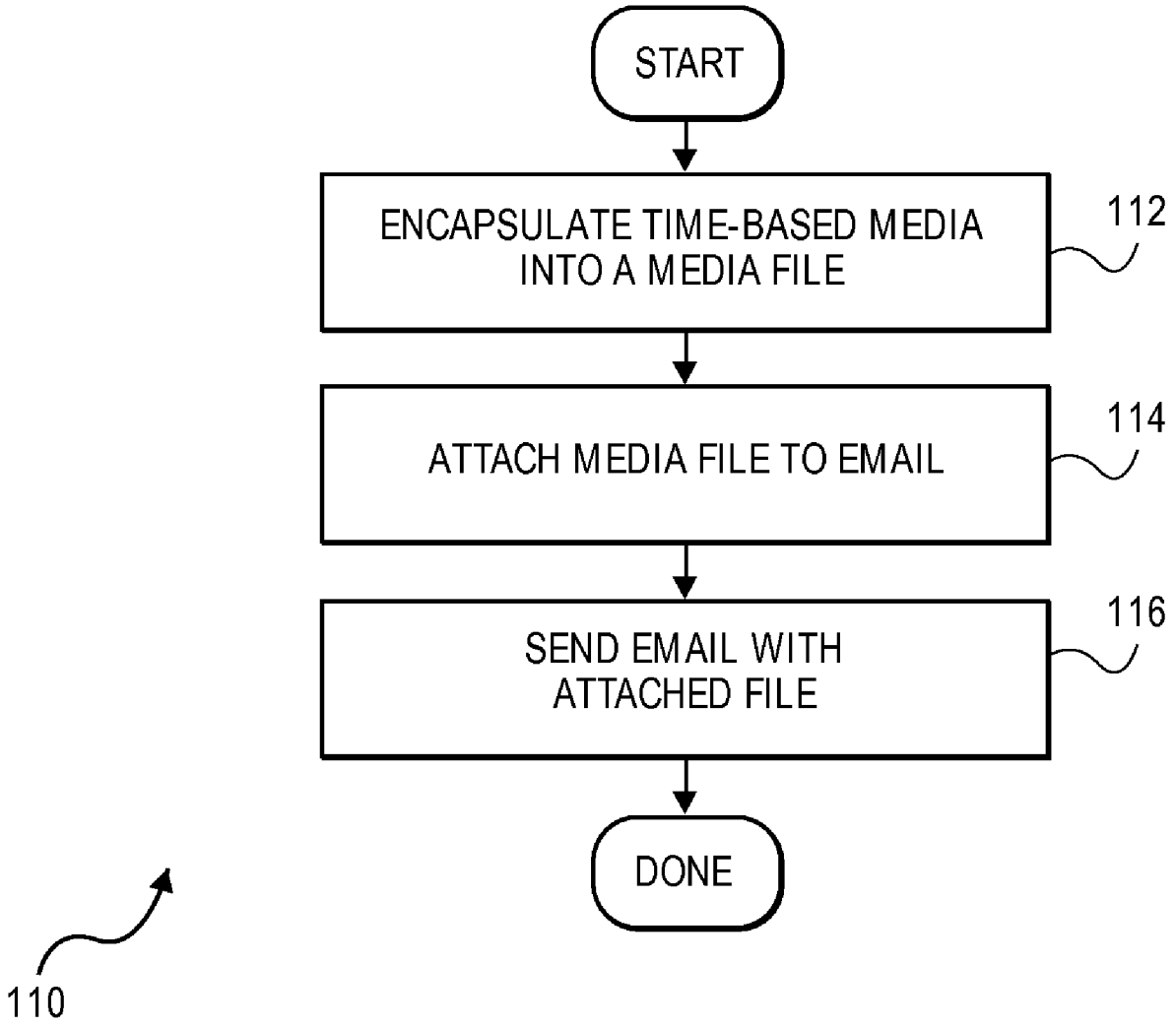

START
ENCAPSULATE TIME-BASED MEDIA INTO A MEDIA FILE
112
ATTACH MEDIA FILE TO EMAIL
114
SEND EMAIL WITH ATTACHED FILE
116
DONE
110

FIG. 6

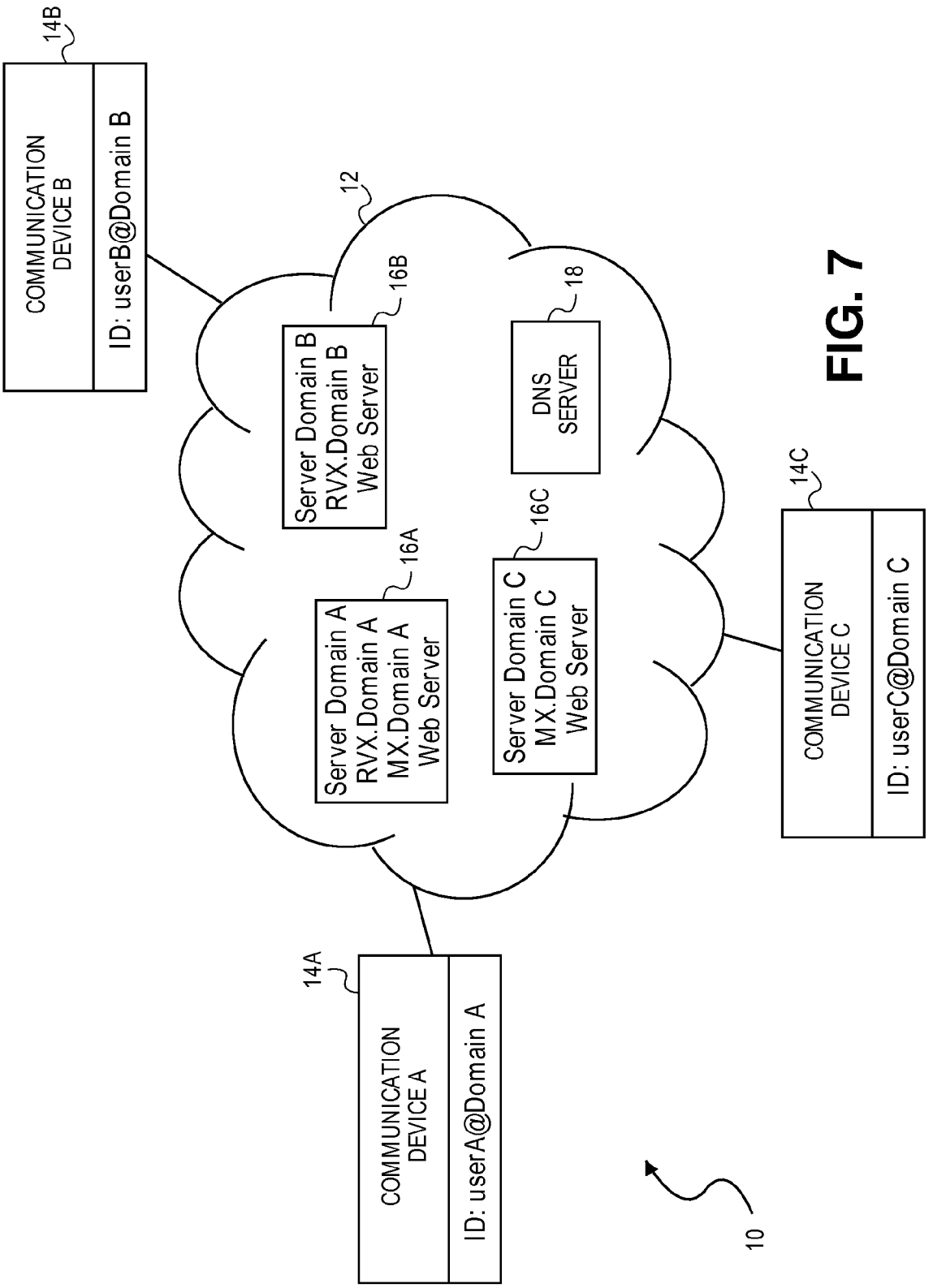

14B
COMMUNICATION DEVICE B
ID: userB@Domain B
12
16B
Server Domain B RVX.Domain B Web Server
18
DNS SERVER
16A
Server Domain A RVX.Domain A MX.Domain A Web Server
16C
Server Domain C MX.Domain C Web Server
14C
COMMUNICATION DEVICE C
ID: userC@Domain C
14A
COMMUNICATION DEVICE A
ID: userA@Domain A
10

FIG. 7

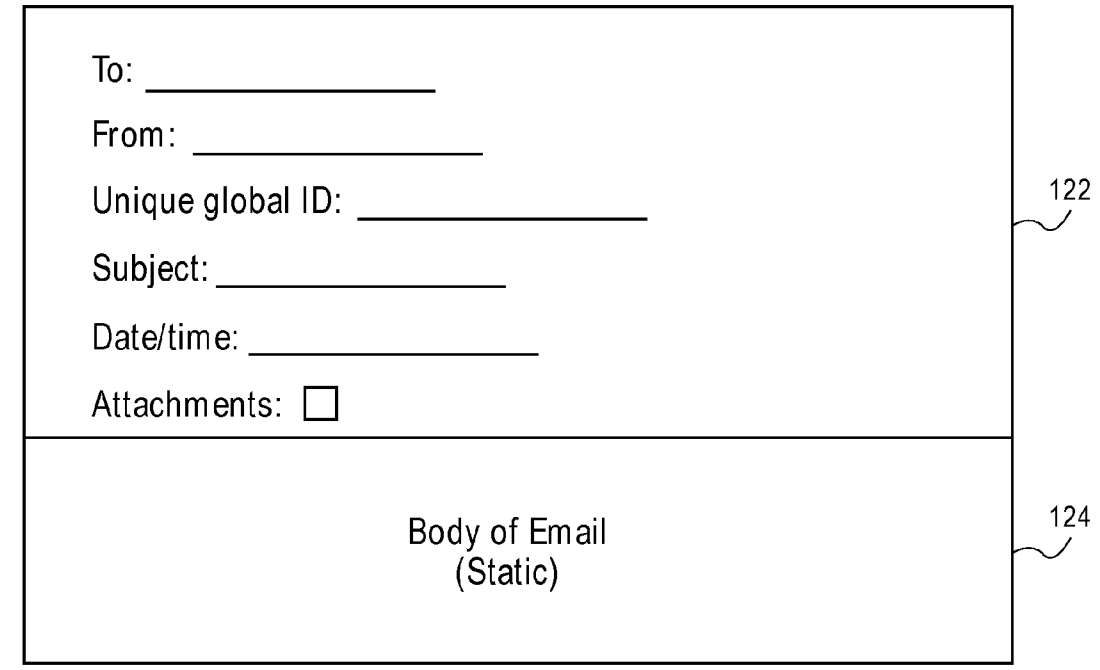


FIG. 8
(PRIOR ART)

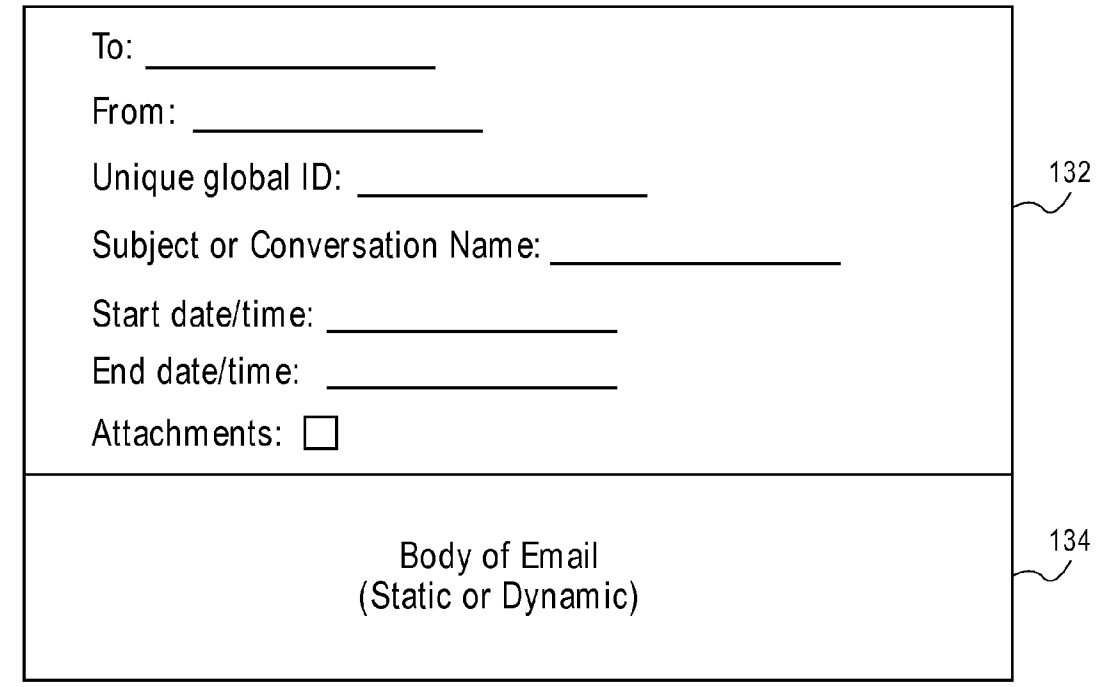


FIG. 9

METHODS FOR USING THE ADDRESSING, PROTOCOLS AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF EMAIL TO SUPPORT NEAR REAL-TIME COMMUNICATION

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/148,885 filed Jan. 30, 2009, entitled "Extending Email to Support the Communication of Time-based Media in Near Real-time", which is incorporated herein by reference for all purposes.

BACKGROUND

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] This invention pertains to communications, and more particularly, to a method and apparatus for using the global addressing, protocols, and/or infrastructure of email to support near real-time communication of time-based media.

[0004] 2. Description of Related Art

[0005] Currently there are three globally used addressing domains. The postal system, which is mainly used for the delivery of letters and parcels, relies on the use of a physical address, such as a house address, office building address or Post Office (PO) box. In order to assure the delivery of a letter or parcel, the physical address of the recipient must be provided, including a country, state or territory, a city or town, postal or zip code, street name and street number. The existing telephone infrastructure defines another global addressing domain that has historically been used for near real-time voice communications (i.e., telephone calls). Both land-line and mobile telephones are addressed (i.e., called) using a telephone number, which typically includes a country code and a variable number of additional digits to identify a particular phone within a given country and/or area code. When a circuit connection is made between the calling parties, a full duplex conversation may take place. A third global addressing system is email. Every email account is identified by a unique globally addressable email address, which defines a user name and a domain name.

[0006] Emails are typically text messages that are sent from a sender to one or more recipients. The emails are created on an email client. One well-known email client is Microsoft Outlook, which is used to create, receive and manage email messages on a computer. Alternatively, free email services like Yahoo, Google or Hotmail are available to users through a web page. Regardless of the type used, an email client will typically (i) list or display all the received messages, with an email header showing the subject of the email, the sender of the email, the date/time it was sent and possibly other attributes such as the size of the email; (ii) allow the user to select messages for review; (iii) allow the user to type and send new messages to recipients and reply to the received emails of others; and (iv) allow attachments, such as still photos, documents, or video clips, to be attached to an outgoing email.

[0007] An email message must first be created in full before it can be sent. A sender will typically first define a recipient by entering their email address into the appropriate "To" field in the header of the email. The text message is then typed into the body of the email and files may optionally be attached. When the message is complete, the user sends the email. During the send sequence, the email client initiates a session with its email server located on a network. This session is typically established with the Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP). During the session, the email client provides the SMTP server with the email address of the sender, the email address of the recipient, and the body of the email with any attachments. The email address of the recipient is segmented into two parts, including the recipient's name (e.g., "jsmith") and the domain name (e.g., "hotmail.com"). If the recipient is in a domain that the SMTP server controls, then the server carries out delivery instructions for the specific recipient, which is typically delivery of the email to an in-box associated with the recipient on the same SMTP server or another server located in the same domain. On the other hand if the recipient is in a domain that the server does not control, then the email server needs to communicate with a server that controls the recipient's domain using SMTP.

[0008] To send the email to the recipient in another domain, the SMTP server initiates a conversation with the Domain Name System (DNS), asking for the Mail eXchanger (MX) record of the recipient's domain. This MX record contains a prioritized list of SMTP servers for that domain. The email is then sent from the SMTP server of the sender to the first SMTP server in the MX list that responds. This first responding server then determines if the recipient is in the domain the first responding server controls. If so, the email is delivered to the inbox of the recipient. If not, the above-described process is repeated until a responding server is the one that can deliver the message into the recipient's inbox. Each server along the delivery route is sometimes referred to as a "hop". The email may then be accessed through the email client of the recipient, which may be located on the computer of the recipient or on the Internet. If an email is sent to multiple parties, the above-described process is repeated for each recipient.

[0009] The above-described sequence generally applies for emails sent over the Internet. With certain proprietary systems, such as an email sent between two Microsoft Exchange users on the same proprietary network, the SMTP protocol may not be used for routing the email but email addresses are still used. The operation of the proprietary protocol and server is essentially the same as SMTP.

[0010] The existing email infrastructure, regardless if it relies on SMTP or a proprietary email protocol, is essentially a "store and forward" messaging system. An email message must first be created in its entirety before it can be sent. At the SMTP or proprietary mail server of the sender, as well as any intermediate email server hops along the path to the SMTP or proprietary mail server of the recipient, the email message must be received in full before it can be forwarded. Finally the email must be received in full at the inbox of the recipient before the recipient can review the message.

[0011] By way of comparison, telephone conversations over the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) are progressive in nature. As words are spoken, they are simultaneously transmitted from the sender to the recipient, where they are heard effectively live or near real-time. As a result, telephone conversations can be conducted in a "live" or near real-time mode through a common network connection (i.e., a circuit). Email communication in contrast usually occurs through a series of separate store and forward messages, often sent back and forth between two or more parties at distinct times, across a network, such as the Internet.

[0012] It is well known to attach a file to an email containing time-based media (i.e., media that changes with respect to time), such as a video clip. The time-based media attached to

an email message, however, can never be reviewed by a recipient "live", as it is being created, due to the store and forward nature of email. Rather the email and the attachment containing the time-based media must first be created, sent, stored and forwarded at each email server hop on the network, and then received by the recipient in full before the time-based media of the attachment can be reviewed. It is therefore not possible for the recipient of an email message to review the media in near real-time as the media is being created.

[0013] Telephone messaging systems are also known where a voice message may be created and sent to a recipient in the form of an email. With these systems, the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) is used in cooperation with emails. In use, a recording of the message must first be made, stored, and then forwarded to the recipient by email. Again, however, the message must first be received in full before the recipient can review the recorded message.

[0014] Instant messaging or IM is another example of a store and forward system. Similar to email as described above, messages must be completed before they can be forwarded to a recipient. Messages in IM systems are generally much shorter than those sent via email. Each line of text in IM systems is a separate message delivered in a store and forward manner. Existing IM systems do not provide a way for a recipient to progressively and simultaneously review a message as the sender creates the message.

[0015] Live text systems are well known, although they were mostly used on early Unix systems with dumb terminal interfaces. In a live text system, each individual keystroke is sent to the recipient as soon as the sender pressed that key. These systems are for text only, but they do allow the recipient to progressively review a message as the message is being created.

[0016] Currently there is no known system or method for extending the global addressing and routing infrastructure of email to support the live or near real-time communication of time-based media between a sender and a recipient using their email addresses.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0017] A method of implementing late binding of time-based media that can be rendered in near real-time by a recipient when transmitted over a communication network is disclosed. The method involves addressing a message to a recipient using an address associated with the recipient and progressively creating time-based media associated with the message. When the address of the recipient is defined, the method uses the address to define an active delivery route for the delivery of time-based media associated with the message in near real-time to the recipient. When the active delivery route is discovered and is available, the method further involves progressively and simultaneously transmitting to the recipient the created time-based media associated with the message as the time-based media is being created.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The invention may best be understood by reference to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which illustrate specific embodiments of the invention.

[0019] FIG. **1** is a diagram of a network capable of supporting live or near real-time communication of time-based media between users according to the present invention.

[0020] FIG. **2** is a diagram of a communication device according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0021] FIG. **3** is a diagram of a communication device according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] FIGS. **4**A and **4**B are flow diagrams illustrating the sequence of creating an email header on a communication device of the present invention.

[0023] FIGS. **5**A through **5**D are flow diagrams illustrating the sequence for conducting communication over the network in accordance with the present invention.

[0024] FIG. **6** is a flow diagram illustrating the attachment of a media file to an email according to the present invention.

[0025] FIG. **7** is a diagram illustrating the delivery of time-based media over the network according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[0026] FIG. **8** is a diagram illustrating the structure of a conventional email according to the prior art.

[0027] FIG. **9** is a diagram of the structure of a progressive email according to the present invention.

[0028] It should be noted that like reference numbers refer to like elements in the figures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS

[0029] The invention will now be described in detail with reference to various embodiments thereof as illustrated in the accompanying drawings. In the following description, specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art, that the invention may be practiced without using some of the implementation details set forth herein. It should also be understood that well known operations have not been described in detail in order to not unnecessarily obscure the invention.

[0030] The present application is directed to a number of embodiments, including (i) the use of the email and DNS infrastructure to define the routing for the delivery of messages containing time-based media while using a near real-time communication protocol for the actual delivery of the media; (ii) various delivery options of messages containing time-based media using email addressing and DNS; (iii) the modification of SMTP or other proprietary email protocols to support the transmission of "progressive" emails containing time-based media; (iv) the late binding of recipient email addresses for near real-time voice or other time-based media communication; and (v) conducting near real-time conversations by routing messages or progressive emails containing time-based media using globally addressable email addresses and DNS. Each of these aspects are described in detail below.

I. The Use of the Email and DNS Infrastructure to Define the Routing for the Delivery of Messages Containing Time-Based Media Using a Near Real-Time Communication Protocol for the Actual Delivery of the Media

[0031] Referring to FIG. **1**, a diagram of a network system capable of (i) supporting "live" or near real-time communication of time-based media and (ii) routing using the infrastructure of email and DNS according to the present invention is shown. The system **10** includes a network **12** with users A, B, C and D using communication devices **14**A, **14**B, **14**C and **14**D and Servers **16**A, **16**B, **16**C and **16**D located on the network **12**. The network **12** further includes a DNS server **18**.

In various embodiments, the network **12** may include the Internet, an intranet, a mobile IP network, or any other type of network that relies on the Internet Protocol and/or DNS, or any combination thereof. Users A, B and C are each addressed by the servers **16**A through **16**D by their respective globally addressable email addresses "UserA@Domain A", "UserB@Domain B", and "UserC@Domain C". User D is intentionally not identified on the network **12** by a globally addressable email address for reasons mentioned below.

[0032] The Servers **16**A, **16**B, **16**C and **16**D are each configured to provide one or more services to Users A, B, C and D respectively. In this example, Server A defines Domain A and provides User A with the standard email delivery service using SMTP (or a similar proprietary service) and MX DNS records, hereafter referred to as "MX". Server A further provides User A with a real-time communication service, hereafter referred to as "RVX". Server **16**B defines Domain B and provides User B with the real-time communication service RVX, but not the email service MX. Server **16**C defines Domain C and provides User C with the email service MX, but not the real-time domain RVX service. Server **16**D does not provide user D with either the real-time communication service RVX nor the email domain MX service, but other services that are not identified because they are not relevant.

[0033] In one embodiment, the real-time service RVX may rely on any communication protocol that allows users to communicate time-based media in near real-time, but does not require the recipient to review the time-based media in a near real-time mode. Known protocols with these properties include the Cooperative Transmission Protocol (CTP) described in detail in the U.S. applications Ser. No. 12/028,400 and Ser. No. 12/192,890 or the near real-time synchronization protocol of voice or other time-based media as described in U.S. application Ser. Nos. 12/253,816, 12/253,833 and 12/253,842. The above-listed U.S. applications are assigned to the assignee of the present invention and are incorporated herein by reference for all purposes.

[0034] In alternate embodiments, the RVX service may rely on other communications protocols, individually or in combination, that provide near real-time communication, such as SIP, RTP, Skype, VoIP, etc.

[0035] The communication devices **14**A through **14**D may each be any type of communication device, such as land-line telephones, VoIP telephones, cellular radios, satellite radios, military or first responder radios, mobile Internet devices, or just about any other type of communication device. In addition, a given user might have multiple communication devices **14**. For example, a user may have one or more of the following; a home computer, a work computer, a Push to Talk radio, a mobile phone or a personal digital assistant (PDA). Regardless of the number of communication devices **14** each user A, B, C and D has, each will operate essentially the same and receive the services provided by the servers **16**A, **16**B, **16**C and **16**D as described herein respectively.

[0036] It should be noted that the system **10** as illustrated has been greatly simplified compared to what would typically be implemented in actual embodiments. For the sake of illustration, the RVX and MX services as (or not) provided to Users A, B, C and D as listed above have been purposely selected to highlight and describe various features and aspects of the present invention. In actual embodiments, however, there would likely be a significantly larger number of users, each with one or more communication devices **14** and associated servers on the network **12**, providing a variety of services to each user. In addition, any combination ranging from a single server or a suite of servers **16** may be included on the network **12** to provide the RVX and/or MX for one to multiple users respectively. The communication devices **14**A, **14**B and **14**C and the servers **16**A, **16**B and **16**C may also communicate with one another in a manner similar to that described above using DNS, SMTP, or other proprietary email protocols for route discovery across one or more hops on the network **12**. The delivery route for a message to a recipient in the same domain is typically delivered to an inbox on the same server **16** or an associated server in the same domain. A message sent to a recipient in another domain will typically be sent to the email server of the recipient via one or more hops across the network **12**. As the routing of emails and media in near real-time across an IP network is well known in the art, a detailed explanation is not provided herein.

[0037] Referring to FIG. **2**, a diagram of a communication device **14** according to one embodiment of the present invention is shown. In this embodiment, the communication device **14** is a mobile device **20** capable of wirelessly communicating with the network **12**, such as a mobile phone or PTT radio. The mobile device **20** may optionally include one or more of the following; a keypad **22**, a display **24**, speaker **26**, microphone **28**, volume control **30**, camera **32** capable of generating still photos and/or video, a display control element **34**, a start function element **36** and an end function element **38**. In various embodiments, the device **20** (i) is IP based, meaning it is designed to communicate over the network **12** using the Internet Protocol and (ii) runs one or more RVX protocols, including any of those listed above or any other near real-time communication protocol. In addition, the device **20** may optionally also locally run an email client, access an email client located on one of the servers **16** located on the network **12**, or be capable of both running and accessing an email client on the network.

[0038] Referring to FIG. **3**, a diagram of a communication device according to another embodiment of the present invention is shown. In this embodiment, the communication device **14** is a computer **40** connected to the network **12**, either through a wired or wireless connection (not shown). The computer **40** optionally includes one or more of the following; a keyboard **42**, a display **44**, speakers **46**, a microphone **48**, a camera **50** capable of generating still photos or video, a mouse **52**, a start function element **54** and an end function element **56**. The computer **40** is capable of running an email client, accessing an email client located on the network **12**, or both. In various embodiments, the computer **40** (i) is IP based, meaning it is designed to communicate over the network **12** using the Internet Protocol and (ii) runs one or more RVX protocols, including any of those listed above or any other near real-time communication protocol. Further, the computer **40** could be a portable computer, such as a laptop or personal digital assistant, and is not limited to the desktop computer as shown. In addition, the device **40** may optionally also locally run an email client, access an email client located on one of the servers **16** located on the network **12**, or be capable of both running and accessing email client on the network.

[0039] The start function elements **36**/**54** and the end function elements **38**/**56** of the mobile device **20** and computer **40** are meant to be symbolic of their respective functions. It is not necessary for mobile device **20**, computer **40**, or any other type of communication device **14**, to physically include start and end buttons per se. Rather, it should be understood that

each of these functions might be implemented in a variety of ways, for example, by entering a voice command, a predefined keystroke or command using a touch screen or other input device such as a mouse, stylus or pointer, etc.

[0040] The network **12** uses the existing email infrastructure, including the globally recognizable email addresses of the recipient users and DNS for route discovery, while using a near real-time RVX protocol for the actual transport of messages containing time-based media to the addressed recipient once the route is discovered. Like conventional emails, each message relies on a header that defines, among other things, a globally addressable email address of one or more recipients for routing purposes. Unlike conventional store and forward emails, however, the time-based media of the message is transmitted using a near real-time RVX protocol. As a result, time-based media may be simultaneously and progressively transmitted across the network **12**, as the sender creates the media. In addition, the recipient may optionally simultaneously and progressively render the time-based media as it is received over the network. When two or more parties are conversing (e.g., generating and reviewing time-based media) at the same time, the network **12** is supporting near real-time communication using an RVX protocol for media delivery, while using the existing email infrastructure and DNS for routing.

[0041] Referring to FIG. **4**A, a flow diagram illustrating the sequence of creating and transmitting time-based media associated with a message on a communication device **14** is shown. If the user of a communication device **14** wishes to communicate with a particular recipient, the user will either select the recipient from their list of contacts or reply to an already received message from the intended recipient. If a message from the intended recipient is not available for responding or if the intended recipient is not already in the contact list, the globally addressable email address of the recipient is manually entered into the device **14**.

[0042] In response to any of the above, a message header is created (step **62**), including the globally addressable email address of the recipient in a "To" header. As soon as the globally addressable email address of the recipient is defined, a DNS lookup is performed, so that the route for delivering the media associated with the message to the globally addressed recipient is immediately discovered. Thereafter, a user may initiate the start function **36**/**54** and begin creating time-based media (step **64**), for example by speaking into the microphone, generating video, or both. The time-based media is then progressively and simultaneously encoded (step **66**), transmitted (step **68**) over the network **12** using an RVX protocol using the discovered delivery route, and optionally persistently stored on the device **14** (step **70**). It should be noted that although these steps **62** through **70** are illustrated in the diagram in a sequence, for all practical purposes they occur at substantially the same time. The user may select a recipient from a contacts list, initiate the start function **36**/**54**, and then begin speaking immediately. As the media is created, the RVX protocol progressively and simultaneously transmits the media across the network **12** to the recipient, using the DNS lookup result to discover the route without any perceptible delay to the sending user.

[0043] The time-based media of outgoing messages may optionally be persistently stored on the sending communication device **14** for a number of reasons. For example, if time-based media of a message is created before the delivery route is discovered, then the time-based media may be transmitted from storage when the delivery route is discovered. If time-based media is still being created after the route is discovered, then the time-based media is transmitted progressively and simultaneously as the media is being created. Alternatively with the storage of time-based media, the sender may review stored messages at an arbitrary later time. A message may also be created and stored when the communication device **14** is not connected to the network **12**, where connected is defined as the ability to send messages over the network and not connected is defined as the inability to send messages over the network. When the device **14** later connects, the message may be transmitted to the intended recipient from storage, using either an RVX protocol or as an attachment to an email.

[0044] Referring to FIG. **4**B, a flow diagram **100** illustrating the sequence for creating a message header (step **62** in FIG. **4**A) is shown. In the step **62***a*, the globally addressable email address of the sender is provided in the "From" field of the message header. In step **62***b*, the globally addressable email address of the recipient is entered into the "To" field of the message header. If there are multiple recipients, the email address of each is entered into the "To" field. In additional embodiments, a "CC" or "BCC" field may be used for one or all recipients. In step **62***c*, a globally unique message ID or number is assigned to the message. In step **62***d*, other information, such as a conversation name, or the subject of the message, is provided in the header. In step **62***e*, the start date/time the message was created and possibly the end date/time of the message may be included in the header. In one embodiment, the steps **62***a* through **62***e* generally all occur at substantially the same time, with the possible exception of defining the end date/time. In other embodiments, the steps **62***a* through **62***e* may occur in any order.

[0045] The start and end date/times ordinarily coincide with the implementation of the start function **36**/**54** and end function **38**/**56** on the sending device **14** respectively. A sender, however, might not always implement the end function **38**/**56** for a given message. When this occurs, the sender may simply stop creating and sending time-based media associated with the message. The message may, therefore, remain "open-ended" without a defined end-time/date.

[0046] In certain embodiments, the steps **62***a* through **62***e* may be performed on a sending communication device **14**. In other embodiments, the sending communication device may send some or all of the message header information to a server **16**, where the steps **62***a* through **62***e* are performed. The time-based media of the message may also be optionally stored on a server **16** for later review by the sending user or transmission to the recipient.

[0047] In the embodiments described above, a message header with various fields including a To, From, Message ID number, Conversation Name, and message Start and End time is provided. It should be understood that not all of these fields are necessary, and other fields may be included. The only required information is at least one recipient specified in one of the To, CC, or BCC fields, which defines the globally addressable email address of a recipient. The other fields are all optional.

[0048] The format of the message header is also variable. In one embodiment, the structure of the message header may be similar to that used with conventional emails or the enveloped used with emails. In other embodiments, the structure of the message header may take any form that is suitable for transmitting the globally addressable email address of the recipient(s), along with possibly other header information, across

the network **12**. While specific email header fields are discussed for specifying recipients, the actual header field containing the recipient address information may not necessarily include the globally addressable email address of the recipient per se. As is well known in the art, an "envelope recipient" may be used to specify the email address of the recipient, even though the envelope recipient may differ from the recipients listed in the email headers. Thus as used herein, the term message header should be broadly construed to include both envelope information and conventional message or email headers including any number of fields, such as but not limited to those specified in RFC 822 or 5322. In addition, the usage of the terms "addressing" or "globally addressable email address" are intended to be broadly construed to include any addressing method, including usage in conventional message or email headers or in a message envelope.

[0049] The network **12**, under certain circumstances, may deliver messages containing time-based media that can (i) be simultaneously and progressively transmitted to a recipient over the network **12** and (ii) reviewed in near real-time by the addressed recipient as the time-based media is being created and sent by the sending user. Under other circumstances, the messages cannot be delivered in real-time. Both the near real-time and non real-time scenarios are discussed below with regard to FIGS. **5**A through **5**C respectively.

[0050] Referring to FIG. **5**A a flow diagram **80** illustrating the sequence for potentially conducting near real-time communication with messages containing time-based media using a globally addressable email address over the network **12** is shown. The sequence is described in the context of user A sending a message to user B using any near real-time RVX protocol. As noted above, server **16**B provides user B with an RVX service, but not the MX service.

[0051] In the initial step **82**, server **16**A receives at substantially the same time the message header (or the header information allowing the server to perform some or all of the steps **62***a*-**62***e*) and the time-based media of the message to be transmitted as it is being progressively and simultaneously created and transmitted by communication device **14**A. As the message header contains user B's globally addressable email address (userB@DomainB) in the "To", "CC", or "BCC" field, server **16**A requests a lookup for the RVX of domain B (step **84**) of DNS server **18** using the DNS protocol. Since the RVX exists for domain B (decision **86**), the lookup result is positive. The time-based media is then progressively and simultaneously sent using the RVX protocol from the server **16**A associated with the sender to server **16**B associated with the recipient. The time-based media may be transmitted across one or more hops between the two servers **16**A and **16**B. At each hop, a DNS lookup is performed to discover the delivery route to the next hop, while the RVX protocol is used to deliver the time-based media to each next hop.

[0052] In one embodiment, the media is simultaneously and progressively transmitted to the communication device **14**B of the recipient when the time-based media arrives at server **16**B. The recipient is notified of the incoming message, and in response, the recipient may elect to simultaneously review the media in the near real-time mode as the media of the message is progressively received.

[0053] In an alternative embodiment, the media of the message is also optionally placed in an inbox and persistently stored on the recipient device **14**B. With the persistent storage of the message, the recipient has the option of reviewing the media in the near real-time mode as the media is received or at an arbitrary later time from storage.

[0054] In yet another embodiment, the message may also be stored in an inbox located at the server **16**B associated with the user B. In this manner, the user of device **14**B may access the message at an arbitrary later time from the inbox on server **16**B. In addition, the server **16**B may encapsulate the message into a file and attach the file to an email. As noted above, user B is not provided the MX service and therefore cannot receive such an email. But in situations where a user can receive emails, the message can be forwarded in the form of an attachment.

[0055] In yet other embodiments, the media of the message may be stored in an out-box of the sending user, either located on the user's sending communication device **14**, or on the server **16**A associated with the sender.

[0056] Referring to FIG. **5**B, the flow diagram **80** is again provided to illustrate communication between user A and user C. As previously noted, server **16**C provides user C with the MX service, but not a real-time RVX service. When user A wishes to communicate with user C, the initial sequence is essentially the same as that described above. Server **16**A initially receives a message header (or the header information necessary to optionally perform steps **62***a*-**62***e*) with the globally addressable email address of user C (userC@domainC) and the progressive and simultaneous transmission of time-based media by user A (step **82**). Since the RVX lookup result (decision **86**) is negative, server **16**A next requests an MX lookup of DNS server **18** for domain C (step **90**) using the DNS protocol. With a positive result (decision **92**), server **16**A sends a conventional email with the time-based media encapsulated as an attachment (step **96**) to server **16**C. At the server **16**C, the email is placed in the recipient's inbox. The email may also be forwarded to an inbox on communication device **14**C. Thus when the recipient does not have the RVX service, the time-based media of the message is sent across the network **12** by Server **16**A to server **16**C, and possibly communication device **14**C, using the store and forward procedure of SMTP or a similar proprietary email system.

[0057] Referring to FIG. **5**C, the flow diagram **80** is again provided to illustrate a communication attempt between user A and user D. As previously noted, user D is not provided with either the email MX service or a near real-time RVX service. When user A wishes to communicate with user D, the initial sequence is essentially the same as that described above. Server **16**A receives a message header with the globally addressable email address of user D (userD@domainD) (or the header information needed to optionally perform steps **62***a* through **62***e*) and the progressive and simultaneous transmission of time-based media by user A (step **82**). Since the RVX lookup (decision **86**) and the MX lookup for domain D (diamond **92**) are both negative, an error message is generated (step **94**) and the message cannot be delivered (step **96**). In various embodiments, the time-based media of the message may be stored at either the sending communication device **14**A, the server **16**A, or both. The message may later be sent when the RVX and/or MX service is provided to user D.

[0058] The scenario described with regard to FIG. **5**C typically occurs if an incorrect email domain name is provided for a recipient. When the sender attempts to send a message using an invalid globally addressable email domain name, the error message (step **94**) results. If the correct domain name in the

email address is provided, the message can then be forwarded using either an RVX protocol or as an attachment to an email using the MX service.

[0059] In an alternative embodiment, the communication devices **14**A through **14**C may be arranged in a peer-to-peer configuration. With this arrangement, at least the sending communication devices **14** are capable of performing the RVX and/or MX lookups on DNS server **18** directly, without the aid of an intervening server **16** to perform the lookup function. The communication devices **14** may also be capable of transmitting the media of the messages directly to other communication devices. Depending on whether the recipient is a member or not of the RVX and/or MX domains, the sending communication device **14**A will either (i) progressively and simultaneously transmit the time-based media of a message to the recipient over the network **12**; (ii) encapsulate the time-based media of the message into a file and transmit an email including the file as an attachment to the recipient using SMTP or a similar proprietary protocol; (iii) or receive an error message if an invalid globally addressable user name or domain name was used in the email address and/or the recipient is not provided the MX service.

[0060] Referring to FIG. **5**D, a flow diagram **100** illustrating the peer-to-peer embodiment is illustrated. In the initial step **101**, a sending communication device **14** indicates that it would like to communicate with a receiving communication device **14**. In decision diamond **102**, the communication device **14** of the sender performs a DNS lookup of the recipient's globally addressable email address to determine if the peer recipient receives the RVX service. If the result of the look up is positive, then the time-based media created (step **103**) using the sending communication device **14** is progressively and simultaneously transmitted (step **104**) to the recipient using the delivery route defined by the RVX lookup. In decision diamond **105**, it is determined if real-time communication is established. If yes, then the transmitted media is progressively and simultaneously rendered at the communication device **14** of the recipient as the media is received (box **106**). If near real-time communication is not established, then the media of the message is placed in the inbox of the recipient (box **107**), either on the device **14** of the recipient, a server **16** associated with the recipient, or possible both. Near real-time communication may not take place with the recipient for a number of reasons, such as the recipient is not available, out of network range, or has indicated a desire to not review the message in the near real-time mode.

[0061] On the other hand if the recipient does not receive the RVX service (decision **102**), then the media of the message is delivered in the form of an attachment to an email, provided the recipient receives the MX domain service. The time-based media is encapsulated into a file and attached to an email (step **108**). When the message is complete, the email is transmitted using the route defined by the MX lookup result (step **109**). In one embodiment, the email may be sent directly from the sending peer if the sending communication device **14** is locally running an email client. The email may be received either at the recipient peer device **14** if running an email client, at a server **16** running an email client on behalf of the recipient or possibly both the receiving peer **14** and server **16**. In situations where both peers are running an email client, media may be sent in the form of an attachment to an email from the sending communication device **14** to the receiving communication device **14**. This differs from known telephone messaging systems, where a server, as opposed to a sending peer, emails a voice message to the recipient. In certain embodiments, an attachment may be substituted or augmented by a link to a web page containing the time-based media, as described in more detail below.

[0062] Referring to FIG. **6**, a flow diagram **110** illustrating the sequence for sending time-based media encapsulated in an email attachment at server **16**A (box **98** in FIG. **5**B) or from a sending device **14**A (box **107** in FIG. **5**D) is shown. In either case, time-based media generated by user A is encapsulated in a file (step **112**) and is attached to the email (step **114**) when the message is complete, for example when the end function **38**/**56** is implemented. In situations where the end function **38**/**56** is not implemented, the end of the message may be declared by default, after a predetermined period of time lapses without the creation of any new time-based media. Once the time-based media of the message is complete, either by the implementation of the end function **38**/**56** or by default, the email with the attachment is then transmitted (step **116**) by server **16**A or communication device **14**A to the MX lookup result of the recipient over the network **12** using the SMTP or a similar proprietary protocol, in a manner similar to a conventional email.

[0063] With either the server or peer-to-peer models described above, the RVX lookup result is initially used to deliver the time-based media. If the RVX attempt fails, then the MX result is used as a backup. With this arrangement, a conventional email with the time-based media included in an attachment and/or web link is used to deliver the media in circumstances where the recipient is not provided RVX service. The email may be created either on a server or on the sending device.

II. Delivery Options

[0064] Referring to FIG. **7**, a diagram illustrating the delivery of time-based media over the network **12** according to another embodiment of the present invention is shown. With this embodiment, the network **12** is essentially the same as that described above with regard to FIG. **1**, with at least one exception. One or more of the servers **16**A-**16**C are configured as web servers, in addition to providing the RVX and/or MX services as described above. With this embodiment, users receive an email from their respective server **16** containing a URL link when a message is sent to them. When the user selects the link through a web browser running on their communication device **14**, the appropriate web server **16** serves up web pages allowing the recipient to access and review the message. The served web pages may also provide a variety of rendering options, such as review the media of the message in either the real-time or time-shifted modes, catch up to live, pause a live conversation, jump to the head of a conversation, jump to a previous point in time of the conversation, render faster, render slower, jump between different conversations, etc. In the figure, the web server functionality is provided as one of the services provided by Servers **16**A, **16**B and **16**C. In an alternative embodiment, the web server functionality can be implemented using one or more other servers (not illustrated) on the network **12** besides **16**A, **16**B or **16**C.

III. Email Protocol Modifications and Progressive Emails

[0065] The messages as described above are routed using globally addressable email address and the DNS infrastructure for defining a delivery route, while using an RVX proto-

col for the actual delivery of the time-based media in near real-time. Although the SMTP standard and other proprietary email protocols as currently defined and used are store and forward protocols, with certain modifications, SMTP and other proprietary email protocols could be used as an RVX messaging protocol for the near real-time delivery of time-based media as contemplated in the present application. With conventional emails, the media content must be composed in full and packaged before the email can be sent. On the receiving end, the email must be received in full before the recipient can review it. As described in detail below, SMTP, Microsoft Exchange or any other proprietary email protocol may be used for creating "progressive" emails, where media may be sent in near real-time.

[0066] The existing email infrastructure can be used to support the near real-time transmission of time-based media by modifying the way the SMTP, Microsoft Exchange or other proprietary email protocols (hereafter generically referred to as an email protocol or protocols) are used on the sending side and modifying the way that emails are retrieved from the server on the receiving side. Current email protocols do not strictly require that the entire message be available for sending before delivery is started, although this is typically how email protocols are used. Time-based media can therefore be delivered progressively, as it is being created, using standard SMTP, Microsoft Exchange or any other proprietary email protocol.

[0067] Email is typically delivered to user devices through an access protocol like POP or IMAP. These protocols do not support the progressive delivery of messages as they are arriving. However, by making simple modifications to these access protocols, a message may be progressively delivered to a recipient as the media of the message is arriving over the network. Such modifications include the removal of the current requirement that the email server know the full size of the email message before the message can be downloaded to the client. By removing this restriction, a client may begin downloading the time-based media of an email message as the time-based media of the email message is received at the server over the network.

[0068] Referring to FIG. **8**, the structure of a conventional prior art email **120** using any of the above listed email protocols is illustrated. The email **120** includes a header **122** and a body **124**. The header includes a "To" (or possibly the CC and/or BCC fields) field, a "From" field, a unique global ID number, a subject field, optional Attachments, and a Date/time stamp. The body **124** of the email includes the media to be transmitted, which typically includes a typed message and possibly attached files (e.g. documents or photos). When complete, the email is sent. A DNS lookup is performed and the email is routed to the recipient. Conventional emails are "static", meaning the body of the email, including attachments, is fixed once transmission starts. There is no way to progressively and simultaneously transmit with conventional emails time-based media as the media is being created. Prior art emails **120** are therefore incapable of supporting near real-time communication.

[0069] Referring to FIG. **9**, the structure of an email **130** according to the present invention is shown. Email message **130** is used for supporting near real-time communication. The email **130** includes a header **132** including a "To" field (and possibly the CC and/or BCC fields) and a body **134**. The structure of email **130**, however, differs from a conventional prior art email **120** in at least two regards. First, the header **132** includes an email Start date/time and an End date/time. By associating a start and end time with an email **130**, as opposed to just a date/time stamp when an email **120** is sent, the second difference may be realized. After an email **130** is created and the sender defines a globally addressable email address of the recipient, the DNS lookup for routing is immediately performed. At substantially the same time, time-based media may be created. As the time-based media is created, it is progressively and simultaneously transmitted to the DNS lookup result, from hop to hop, using the streaming nature of SMTP, Microsoft Exchange or any other type of email protocol. The body **134** of email **130** is therefore "progressive". As time-based media associated with an email message **130** is dynamically created, the time-based media is simultaneously and progressively transmitted to the email server of the recipient, from hop to hop across the network when necessary. If an email **130** is sent to multiple recipients, regardless if identified in the To, CC or BCC fields, the above process is repeated for each.

[0070] The DNS lookup is immediately performed right after the email address of the recipient is defined by initiating an email protocol session with the email server associated with the sender. This differs from conventional emails **120**, where the email protocol session is typically initiated only after the email has been composed in full and the sender implements a "send" function. As a result, the delivery route can be discovered either before or concurrent with the progressive and simultaneous transmission of time-based media as it is being created. In situations where time-based media is created before the session is established, the time-based media may be either temporarily or persistently stored as the media is created. The stored media may then be progressively transmitted from storage once the protocol session with the email server is established.

[0071] The End date/time of email **130** may be either defined or open-ended. When the sender implements the end function **38/56** on the communication device **14**, then the end time of the email **130** is defined. If the end function **38/56** is never implemented, then the duration of the email **130** is "open-ended" and does not necessarily have a defined end date/time. Open-ended emails **130** are therefore typically terminated by default after a predetermined period of time where no media is created.

[0072] In summary, progressive emails **130** can be sent using SMTP, Microsoft Exchange or any other proprietary email protocol by implementing the above-described modifications. Similarly, recipients may simultaneously and progressively review the time-based media of progressive emails **130** by modifying access protocols such as POP, IMAC and the like. Together, these modifications enable the use of email addressing, email protocols, DNS and the existing email infrastructure to support real-time communication of time-based media.

IV. Late Binding of Recipient Addresses For Real-Time Voice and Other Time-Based Media

[0073] In the context of communications, a recipient address can be described as "bound" when a valid delivery path through the network has been determined for that address. Conventional telephone calls over the PSTN are said to use "early binding" because the dialed phone number, the "recipient address" in this case, is used to establish some active path (i.e., a circuit connection) to the recipient before any media can be transmitted to the recipient. Only after the

connection is made can the caller begin speaking and the media transmitted. Regardless if the call is placed to one or more telephone numbers, or the call is transferred a voice messaging system, the binding typically occurs before any words can be delivered. Since the binding of the recipient's address to an active destination on the network happens before any transmission of media, it is said to be "early". In contrast, emails are said to employ "late" binding. A person may compose an email message and send it over a network without binding that message to the device on which the recipient will consume it. Instead, after the email is composed, the email address of the recipient is used to route the email to the recipient to be reviewed on a device and at a time of the recipient's choosing.

[0074] With the messages (as described with regard to FIGS. **4**A, **4**B and **5**A-**5**D) or emails **130** described above, a user may address a recipient using their globally addressable email address and then immediately begin talking or generating time-based media. As described above, the DNS lookup to define the delivery route is performed immediately, as soon as the email address of the recipient is defined. At substantially the same time, any available time-based media is progressively and simultaneously transmitted across the network **12** to the recipient. Thus the discovery of an active delivery route and the progressive and simultaneous creation, transmission and delivery of the time-based media occur at substantially the same time as the time-based media is created. In the event the actual delivery route is discovered after the creation of time-based media has started, then the media may be temporarily or persistently stored and then transmitted from storage once the active delivery route is defined. No network connection or circuit needs to be established before the user may start talking. The ability to progressively and simultaneously transmit the time-based media using DNS and the infrastructure of email therefore enables the late binding of recipient addresses for voice and other time-based media in a manner that previously was not possible.

V. Conversations

[0075] The messaging method and system as described (with regard to FIGS. **1**-**3**, **4**A-**4**B and **5**A-**5**D) is conducive for supporting conversations between sending and receiving users. When two or more parties are conversing back and forth using any of the above-listed RVX protocols, such as VoIP, SIP, RTP, or Skype, then the conversation may take place in the live near real-time mode. When the RVX protocol allows users to communicate time-based media in near-real-time, but does not require the recipient to review the time-based media in near real-time, such as with the CTP or synchronization protocols mentioned above, then the conversation may take place (i) in the near real-time mode; (ii) the time-shifted mode; or (iii) seamlessly transition between the two modes.

[0076] Reply messages may be routed in a number of different ways. For example, with the CTP and synchronization protocols, the globally addressable email addresses of the participants along with the DNS routing information may be embedded in the streaming media. When a reply is to be sent, the embedded address and routing information is used for the reply message. Alternatively, messages may be routed using a conversation ID or other pointer included in the streaming media which points to the globally recognizable email addresses of the participants along with the DNS routing information. In yet another alternative, the participants may be explicitly addressed and a DNS lookup performed for the reply message.

[0077] The progressive email **130** embodiment described above can also be used for implementing conversations. When a conversation is initiated, an email **130** is created by the sender, at either the sending communication device **14** if running an email client or on a mail server on the network running an email client on behalf of the sender. As the media of the progressive email **130** is created, it is progressively transmitted to the recipient, using the routing defined by DNS. To reply, a progressive email **130** is created on behalf of the recipient, either on the recipient's device **14** or on a server running an email client on behalf of the recipient. The email address of the original sender is automatically inserted in the "To" field (or possibly the CC and/or BCC fields) of the return email **130** and the DNS lookup is performed. The media associated with the return email may be transmitted using the streaming feature of SMTP, Microsoft Exchange, or another proprietary email protocol as soon as the media is created. Recipients may simultaneously review the time-based media in near real-time as the media is progressively received at their email client.

[0078] Regardless of the embodiment, the "reply" function may be implemented in a variety ways. For example, the recipient may enter an explicit reply command into their communication device **14**, such as by using a predefined voice or keystroke command, or entering a command through a touch screen. Alternatively, a reply message or email may be generated automatically when the recipient begins speaking or generating other time-based media in response to an incoming message or email **130**. When a reply message is automatically created, the email address of the original sender is extracted from the incoming message and used for addressing the reply message.

[0079] In yet other embodiments, the RVX protocol used for sending and receiving the messages of a conversation between participants do not necessarily have to be the same. For example, one participant may send messages using one of the CTP, synchronization, progressive emails, VoIP, SIP, RTP, or Skype protocols, whereas other participants may use a different one of the listed protocols, provided some type of a common conversation identifier is used. Any messages, regardless of the protocol used for transmission, are linked or threaded together using the unique conversation identifier.

[0080] In various further embodiments, conversations can be defined using a variety of criteria. For example, conversations may be defined by the name of a person (e.g., mom, spouse, boss, etc) or common group of people (e.g., basketball team, sales team, poker buddies, etc). Conversations may also be defined by topic, such as fantasy football league, ACME corporate account, or "skunk works" project. Regardless of the contextual attribute used to define a conversation, the ability to link or organize the messages of a particular conversation together creates the notion of a persistent or ongoing conversation. With a conventional telephone call, the conversation typically ends when the parties hang up. There is no way to contextually link, organize and possibly store the spoken words of multiple telephone conversations between the same parties. On the contrary, conversations, as defined herein, are a set of common messages linked together by a common attribute. So long as messages are added to the conversation, the conversation is continuous or ongoing. This attribute makes it possible for a participant to contribute to a

conversation at any arbitrary time. For example, a user may select a conversation among a list of conversations and contribute a message to the selected conversation at anytime. The message is then sent to all the conversation participants. Messages are therefore not necessarily sent when either a conversation is first created or in reply to an incoming message.

VI. Implementation Embodiments

[0081] The messaging methods as described with regard to FIGS. **1-3**, **4A-4B** and **5A-5D** and progressive emails **130** may be implemented in a variety of ways. For example, cell phone and other mobile communication service providers may provide users with peer-to-peer mobile communication devices that operate using either messages and/or progressive emails **130**. In addition, these service providers may also maintain a network **12** of servers **16** for receiving messages and/or emails **130** from non peer-to-peer communication devices, creating messages, performing DNS lookup operations and for routing the time-based media of messages using any one or possibly multiple RVX protocols. In yet another embodiment, the messaging and progressive email **130** methods may be embedded in a software application that is intended to be loaded into and executed on conventional telephones, mobile or cellular telephones and radios, mobile, desktop and laptop computers. In each of these cases, the application enables the device to send, receive and process messages and progressive emails **130** as described herein. In yet other implementations, an email client can be modified to create, receive and process progressive emails **130**. The email client may alternatively reside on a server on the Internet or other network, on sending or receiving devices, or both.

[0082] Although the above-described email methods were generally described in the context of a single sender and a single recipient (as discussed with regard to FIGS. **4A-4B** and **5A-5D**) or emails **130** to a single recipient, it should be understood the messages and/or emails **130** might be simultaneously sent to multiple parties. Each recipient will either receive or not receive the message or email, depending on their status, as described above. As described in more detail in the above-mentioned U.S. applications, the media may be rendered using a number of different rendering options, such as catch up to live, pause a live conversation, jump to the head of a conversation, jump to a previous point in time of the conversation, render faster, render slower, jump between different conversations, etc. The time-based media exchanged by the messages and/or emails is not limited to just voice or video. In addition, the time-based media may be delivered to a recipient in a different form than it was created. For example, a voice message may be transcribed into a text file or a message in English may be translated into another language before being delivered to the recipient. Any media that varies over time, such as sensor data, GPS or positional information, may be transmitted. While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to specific embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that changes in the form and details of the disclosed embodiments may be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. It is therefore intended that the invention be interpreted to include all variations and equivalents that fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention, as provided in the attached claims.

1. A method of implementing late binding of time-based media that can be rendered in near real-time by a recipient when transmitted over a communication network, comprising:

addressing a message to a recipient using an address associated with the recipient;

progressively creating time-based media associated with the message;

discovering an active delivery route over the communication network to progressively and simultaneously deliver the time-based media associated with the message to the recipient using the address associated with the recipient; and

progressively and simultaneously transmitting the time-based media associated with the message to the recipient as the time-based media is being created when the active delivery route is discovered and is available.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein discovering the active delivery route and progressively and simultaneously transmitting the time-based media of the message occur at substantially the same time.

3. The method of claim **1**, wherein discovering the active delivery route occurs after the creation of the time-based media of the message has started.

4. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

progressively storing the time-based media as the time-based media is created; and

progressively and simultaneously transmitting from storage the created time-based media stored before the discovery and availability of the active discovery route.

5. The method of claim **1**, wherein discovering the active delivery route further comprises defining one or more hops on the communication network between a sender of the message and the recipient.

6. The method of claim **5**, wherein defining the one or more hops further comprises using a first lookup result of the address associated with the recipient at each of the one or more hops respectively.

7. The method of claim **6**, wherein the first lookup result of the address is a DNS lookup result of an email address associated with the recipient, the first lookup result ascertaining if the address of the recipient is in a domain capable of supporting a near real-time communication protocol and the next hop on the network.

8. The method of claim **7**, further comprising using a second lookup result of the address of the recipient if the result of the first lookup is negative, the second lookup result determining if the recipient is in a domain capable of supporting email services and a delivery route to the next hop for delivering email messages to the recipient.

9. The method of claim **8**, further comprising, when the second lookup result is positive, the following:

encapsulating the time-based media associated with the message into a file;

attaching the file to an email message; and

transmitting the email message with the attached file to the recipient using the determined email delivery route.

10. The method of claim **1**, wherein progressively and simultaneously transmitting the time-based media associated with the message further comprises using a communication protocol that allows the communication of time-based media in near real-time, but does not require the recipient to review the time-based media in a near real-time mode.

11. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

progressively and simultaneously delivering the time-based media of the message at a communication device associated with the recipient; and

enabling the recipient to progressively and simultaneously rendering the time-based media of the message at the communication device of the recipient as the time-based media is progressively and simultaneously is delivered.

12. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

delivering the time-based media of the message at a communication device associated with the recipient;

enabling the storage of the time-based media of the message at the communication device associated with the recipient; and

providing the recipient with the option to review the time-based media of the message at an arbitrary later time by retrieving the time-based media from storage.

13. The method of claim **12**, wherein enabling the storage of the time-based media of the message at the communication device associated with the recipient further comprises:

(i) enabling the storage of the time-based media on a computer or phone associated with the recipient;

(ii) enabling the storage of the time-based media on a server on the network accessible by the recipient; or

(iii) both (i) and (ii).

14. The method of claim **5**, wherein each of the one or more one hops may comprise one of the following:

(i) a server to server hop;

(ii) a client to server hop; or

(iii) server to client hop.

15. The method of claim **1**, wherein progressively and simultaneously transmitting the time-based media associated with the message further comprises using one of the following: VoIP, SIP, RTP, Skype, progressive emails, a communication protocol that allows the communication of time-based media in near real-time, or any combination thereof.

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