

# C.R.T

FOR  
IT  
PROS

Spring 2004

## BRIDGING REAL ESTATE AND TECHNOLOGY

**In technology you innovate by reviewing** the needs of your user community then applying your IT skills to reach innovative solutions. That's why surveys such as the CRT REALTOR® Technology Survey and the CRT Multiple Listing Service Technology Survey are so valuable. These annual compilations provide a way for CRT and NAR to hear about the current state of technology in the real estate industry directly from brokers, MLS staff, and real estate IT professionals. With this feedback, we can pinpoint your biggest technology hurdles, then bring our programming and testing skills to bear in helping you expunge potential problems.

Last year's survey results showed a growing industry concern about data security. In response, CRT developed REALTOR® Secure,

an innovative data certification program that gives you the tools to perform a self-review of your company's or MLS's to data security and solve problems before vital data is threatened. Survey results, along with input from NAR leadership and local association and company representatives, also convinced us of the need to prevent unauthorized users from pirating listing data. In response, we developed NoScrape (see story below). Without a doubt, this year's survey, with its revelations on shifting industry practices, will provide a framework for still more programs and products to help the real estate industry use technology more productively.

**Mark Lesswing** ([mlesswing@realtors.org](mailto:mlesswing@realtors.org))  
Vice President, Center for REALTOR® Technology

### Future Innovations

#### Setting a New Standard

**The Challenge:** Taking the productivity gains from the Real Estate Transaction Standard to the next level.

**The CRT Solution:** RETS 2.0, the next major revision of RETS, is underway. The current standard (1.7) has already significantly improved the ability of brokerage companies and MLSs to seamlessly share and transfer property-listing data over the Internet. During a meeting from March 23 to 25, CRT representatives and other members of the RETS standards committee set these major goals for the new standard, which will be implemented during 2004.

- Interoperability with complementary standards, such as the MISMO standard for mortgages.
- Enhanced security features, such as the ability to encrypt data so that it can be viewed only by downstream viewers.
- Improved data transport and easier implementation through the use of a SOAP-based Web services, REST, or message-oriented middleware.
- Compatibility with earlier versions of RETS, either directly or through a proxy interface.

The group made the job of writing RETS client applications for multiple servers easier under current standards by adopting some 300 standard names.

CRT also advanced the implementation of current and future RETS standards with the April release of Rex 2.0. The new version of this open-source, Java-based reference server makes deployment and code maintenance easier. Rex supports PostgreSQL and Microsoft

SQL Server databases and runs on any platform where a Java 1.3 JDK is available. The Windows version now includes an easy-to-use installer that allows Rex to run as a Windows service. The new version also provides an administration tool, both GUI and command line, for easy deployment.

**Learn More:** For the latest update of RETS standard development and the newest RETS-compliant software, go to [www.rets.org/](http://www.rets.org/). To run a demonstration of REX 2.0, go to <http://www.crt.realtors.org/projects/rets/rex/>.

### Current Solutions

#### Combat Screen Scraping

**The Challenge:** Preventing hackers from "harvesting" listings and other proprietary content from your Web sites.

**The CRT Solution:** No Scrape, an innovative new technology, prevents masquerade browsers from hijacking your Web content. Developed by CRT, NoScrape prevents the harvesting of listings and other valuable real estate content by generating a single image of information. Listing information shown by NoScrape can be obtained from either the MLS or files stored in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Listing text and pictures are drawn on an easily customizable canvas, which replaces tags in standard HTML. The canvas, which is about 10-percent larger than a standard image, also contains a "tamper seal" that allows you to copyright property summaries and prove ownership or origination. The seal is created from an MD5 hash of the timestamp, listing owner, listing number, and



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

*The Voice for Real Estate®*



# C.R.T.

BRIDGING REAL ESTATE AND TECHNOLOGY

listing price to ensure easy authentication.

NoScrape is able to achieve this high level of data protection without sacrificing usability. Because NoScrape can tell the difference between text data and e-mail or URL links, consumer can use links displayed as icons to click through to any other point on the Web. E-mail links can be configured to send mail out through any accessible SMTP server. An in-memory cache implementing a least-recently-used algorithm keeps commonly requested properties available.

**Learn More:** To review documentation or download the beta version of NoScrape, go to <http://www.crt.realtors.org/projects/noScrape/index.html>.

## Current Solutions

### Technology Benchmarking

**The Challenge:** Assessing whether your technology investment is ahead of the curve—or behind it.

**The CRT Solution:** Get the facts on what and how brokerages and MLSs use technology today, from the brand-new REALTOR Technology Survey and the MLS Technology Survey. Whether it's the rising use of RETS in data transport (up to 15 percent of MLS IDX functions) or the rapid growth of wireless Internet (23 percent in 2004), keeping your company or MLS on the cutting edge of technology means knowing what programs and devices are winning acceptance and which are being left behind. The REALTOR® survey demonstrates that there's still an untapped competitive advantage in becoming an early adopter of customer relationship management software (only 19 percent of associates use it).

The MLS survey highlights the shifting value proposition of MLSs. While 88 percent of MLSs no longer perform the traditional function of loading listing data, 55 percent now track closed sales for their members, a function that demonstrates the industry's increased reliance on MLS data integrity. The MLS survey also points out for the first time the presence of peer-to-peer listing networks as an alternative to traditional MLSs. Surveys aid in strategic planning by comparing actual demand for technologies such as VOWs, IDX, image processing, and closed sales tracking with actual usage. Before you allocate your technology dollars this year, learn where your spending will pay off by reading the REALTOR® and MLS Technology Surveys.

**Learn More:** To download PDFs of both surveys, go to <http://www.realtors.org/crtweb.nsf/pages/CRTsurvey>.

## Current Solutions

### A Risk-Free Risk Assessment

**The Challenge:** Deciding where to allocate your limited security resources to minimize threats to your critical online data.

**The CRT Solution:** A free security scan will locate holes and vulnerabilities in your Web site. Although limited in scope, the CRT security scan provides a report that details data risks that should be investigated. It's also a logical first step in attaining REALTOR® Secure certification. More than 30 companies associations, and MLSs have already performed this free scan.

The self-directed assessment uses over 2,000 tests and plug-ins to identify security vulnerabilities. Each vulnerability is weighted with a risk level that corresponds to how frequently this technique is used by hackers. Once you've identified your site's most critical vulnerabilities, you're ready to contact a REALTOR® Secure evaluator for advice on how to best improve your technology security.

eRealty has already learned the value of using REALTOR® Secure to protect its technology systems and its customers' personal information. According to Arthur Kay, director of information services at eRealty, "We found the REALTOR® Secure process to be simple and straightforward. The evaluator helped us resolve our security issues and will provide ongoing scans. And the cost was very reasonable."

**Learn More:** To complete your company's own free security scan, go to: <http://www.crt.realtors.org/scan>. For more information on REALTOR® Secure, go to: <http://www.realtor.org/secure>.

## SOLICITATIONS

**Educate Real Estate Execs and AEs.** Do you need help explaining the business benefits of emerging technologies to your organization's leadership? The Center for REALTOR® Technology can help. Suggest that your company's or association's top executives sign up for a free CRT e-mail newsletter describing the value of new technologies in straightforward business language. Subscribe at [www.crt.REALTORS.org/newsletter-broker](http://www.crt.REALTORS.org/newsletter-broker).

**Make CRT Your Tech Resource.** Take advantage of personalized technology consulting, courtesy of CRT. Let CRT help you find the best solution to your toughest tech challenge. If there are technology issues or products you'd like the CRT to investigate or just a tough question you'd like answered, please e-mail your suggestions to [info@crt.realtors.org](mailto:info@crt.realtors.org).

**Opt-Out Options.** To unsubscribe from this newsletter, go to [www.crt.REALTORS.org/newsletter-tech](http://www.crt.REALTORS.org/newsletter-tech).



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

*The Voice for Real Estate®*

