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(54) **METHODS, SYSTEMS, AND PRODUCTS FOR SAMPLED CONTENT**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Methods, systems, apparatuses, devices, and products provide sampled content. One such method receives a programming guide comprising a listing of available content. An ancillary stream of data is received and includes samples of content listed in the programming guide. A user input is received that selects a particular content from the programming guide. Unselected samples of content are filtered from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content. The sample is processed for preview of the selected particular content.

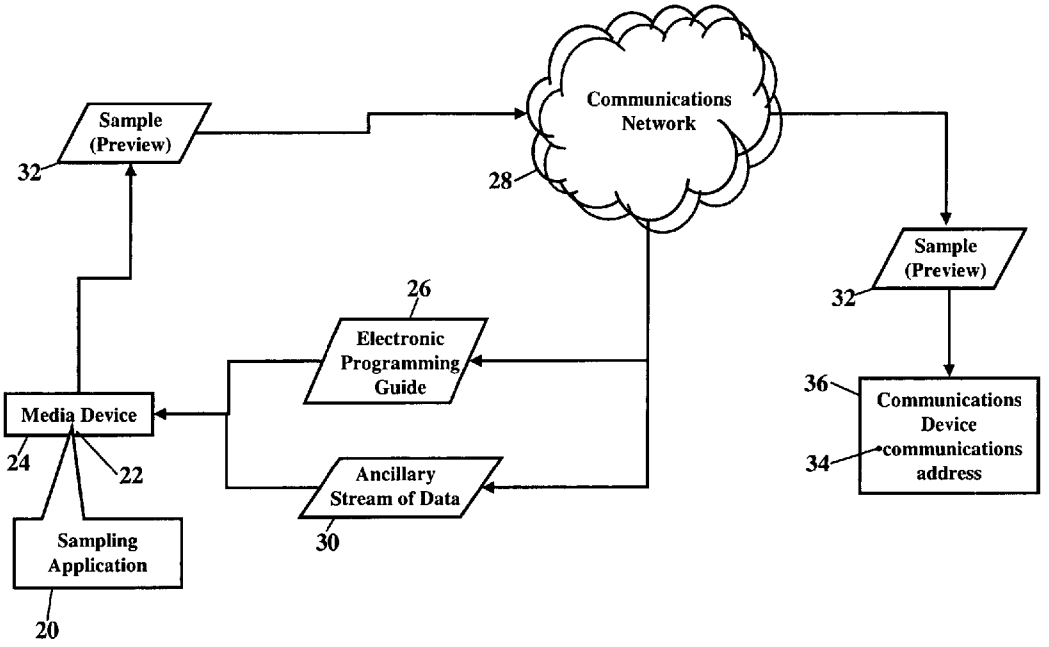


FIG. 1

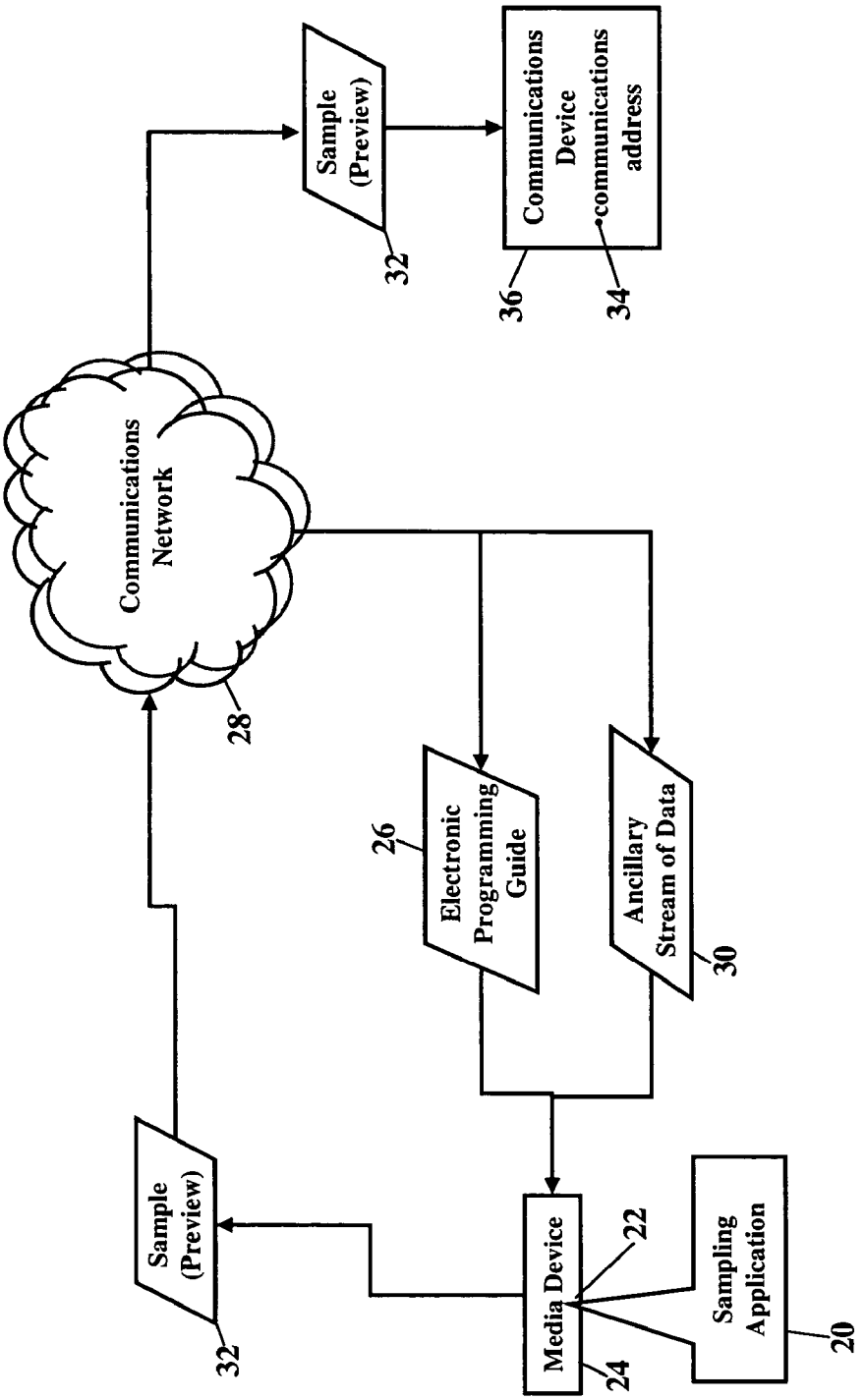

Sample (Preview)
32
Communications Device communications address
36
34
Communications Network
28
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
Sample (Preview)
32
Media Device
24
22
Sampling Application
20

FIG. 2

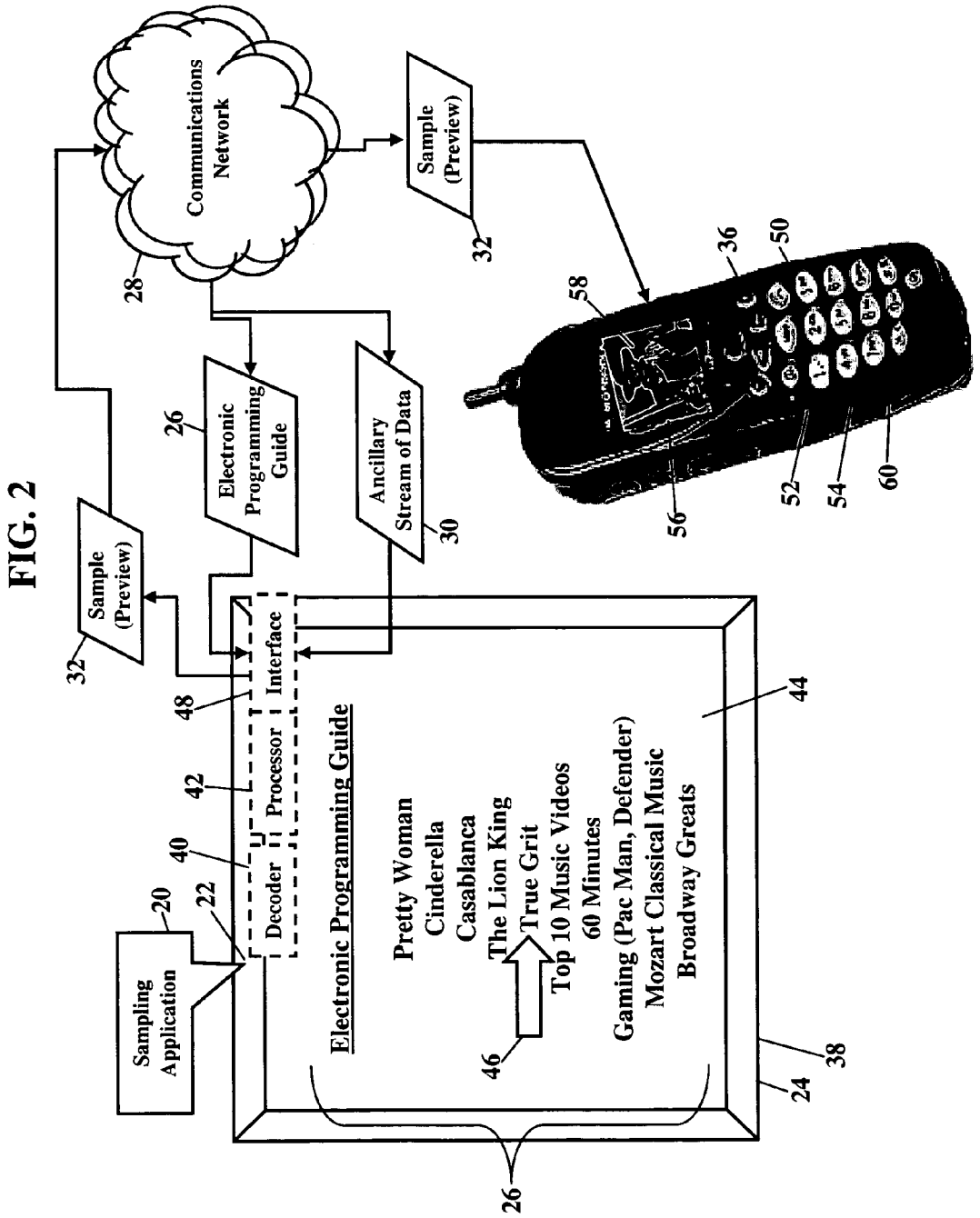

Communications Network
28
Sample (Preview)
32
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
Sample (Preview)
32
36
50
58
56
52
54
60
48
Decoder Processor Interface
42
40
20
22
Sampling Application
Electronic Programming Guide
Pretty Woman
Cinderella
Casablanca
The Lion King
True Grit
Top 10 Music Videos
60 Minutes
Gaming (Pac Man, Defender)
Mozart Classical Music
Broadway Greats
46
44
38
24
26

FIG. 3

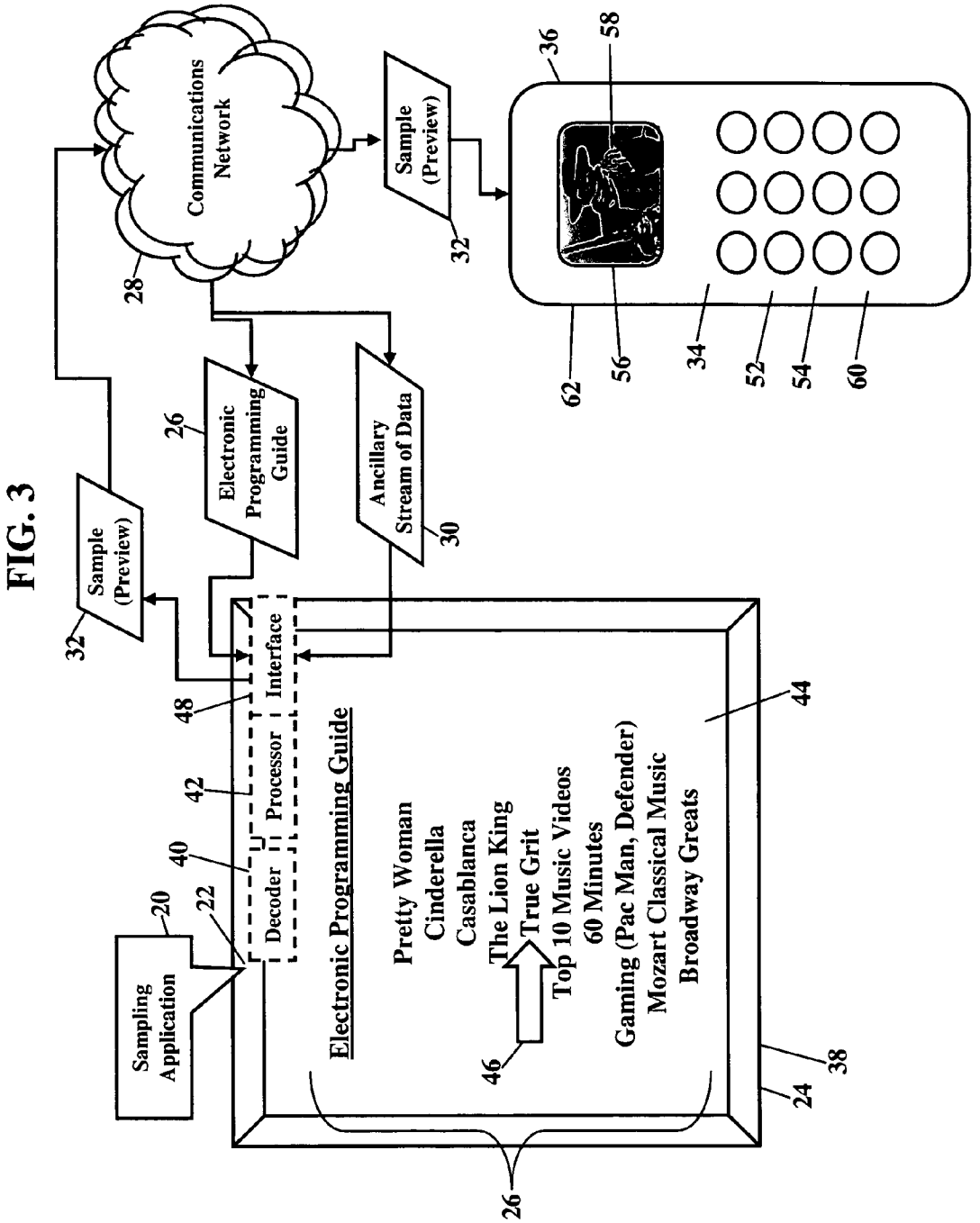

Communications Network
28
Sample (Preview)
32
36
58
62
56
34
52
54
60
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
Sample (Preview)
32
48
Decoder
Processor
Interface
42
40
20
22
Sampling Application
Electronic Programming Guide
Pretty Woman
Cinderella
Casablanca
The Lion King
True Grit
Top 10 Music Videos
60 Minutes
Gaming (Pac Man, Defender)
Mozart Classical Music
Broadway Greats
46
44
38
24
26

FIG. 4

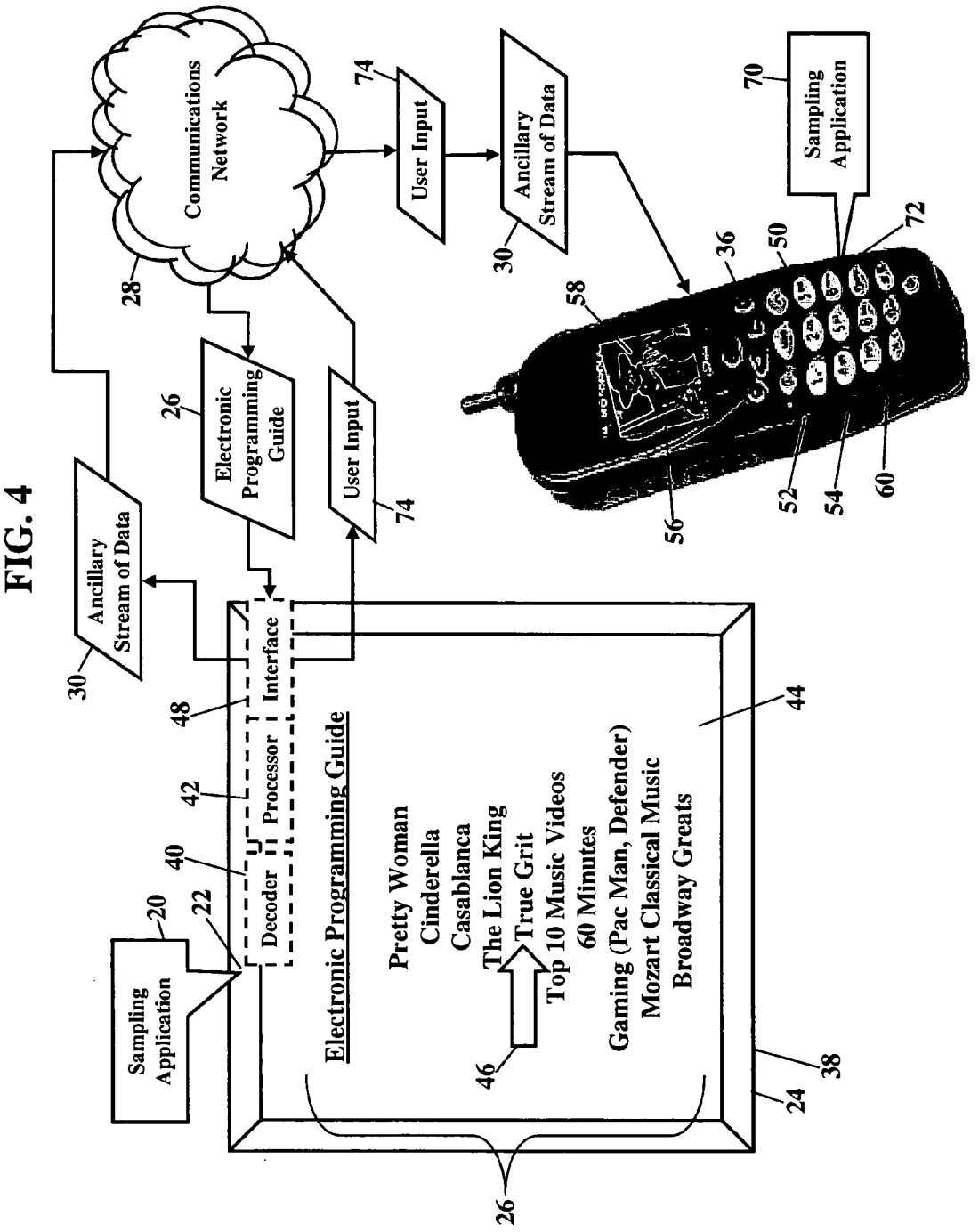

Communications Network
28
User Input
74
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
Sampling Application
70
36
50
72
58
Electronic Programming Guide
26
User Input
74
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
56
52
54
60
Sampling Application
20
22
Decoder
Processor
Interface
40
42
48
Electronic Programming Guide
Pretty Woman
Cinderella
Casablanca
The Lion King
True Grit
Top 10 Music Videos
60 Minutes
Gaming (Pac Man, Defender)
Mozart Classical Music
Broadway Greats
46
44
38
24
26

FIG. 5

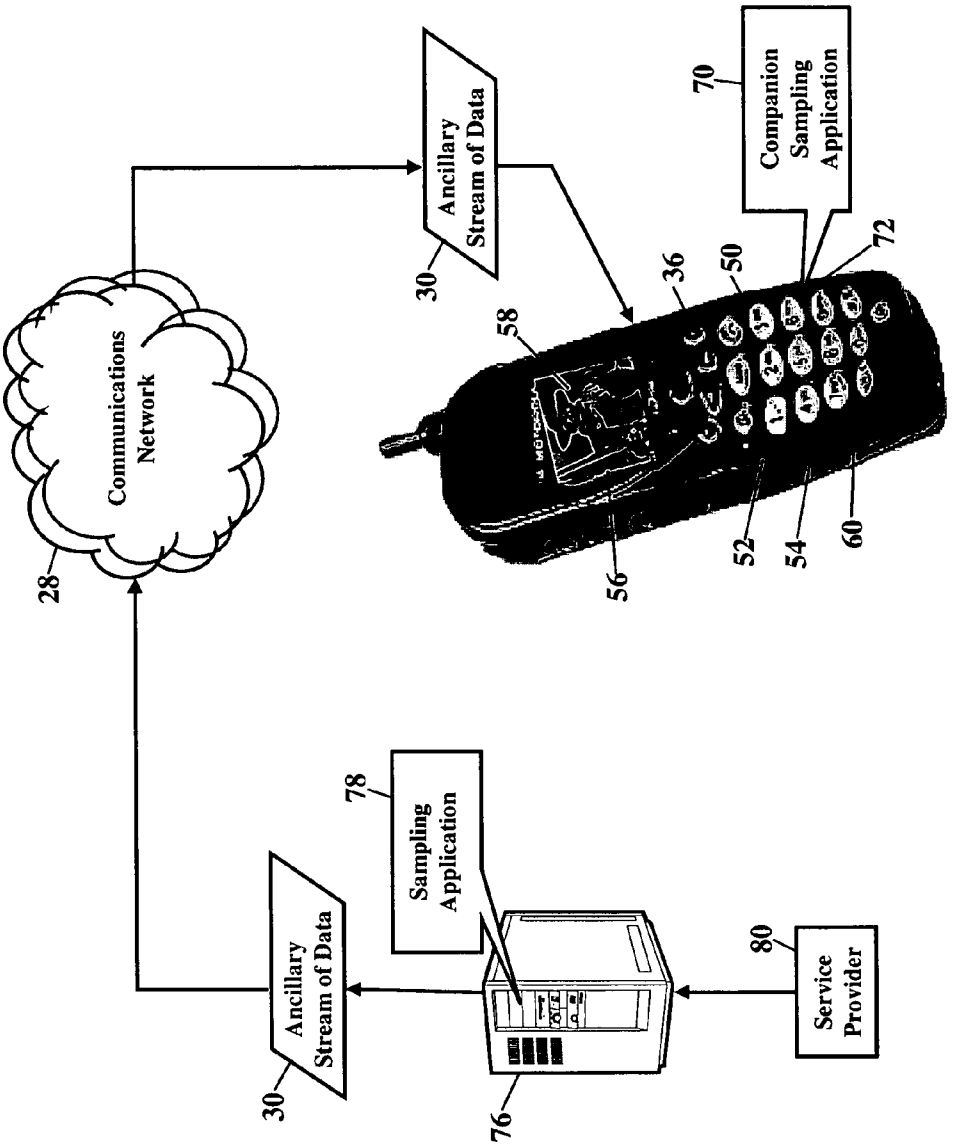

Communications Network
28
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
Companion Sampling Application
70
72
36
50
58
56
52
54
60
Sampling Application
78
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
76
Service Provider
80

FIG. 6

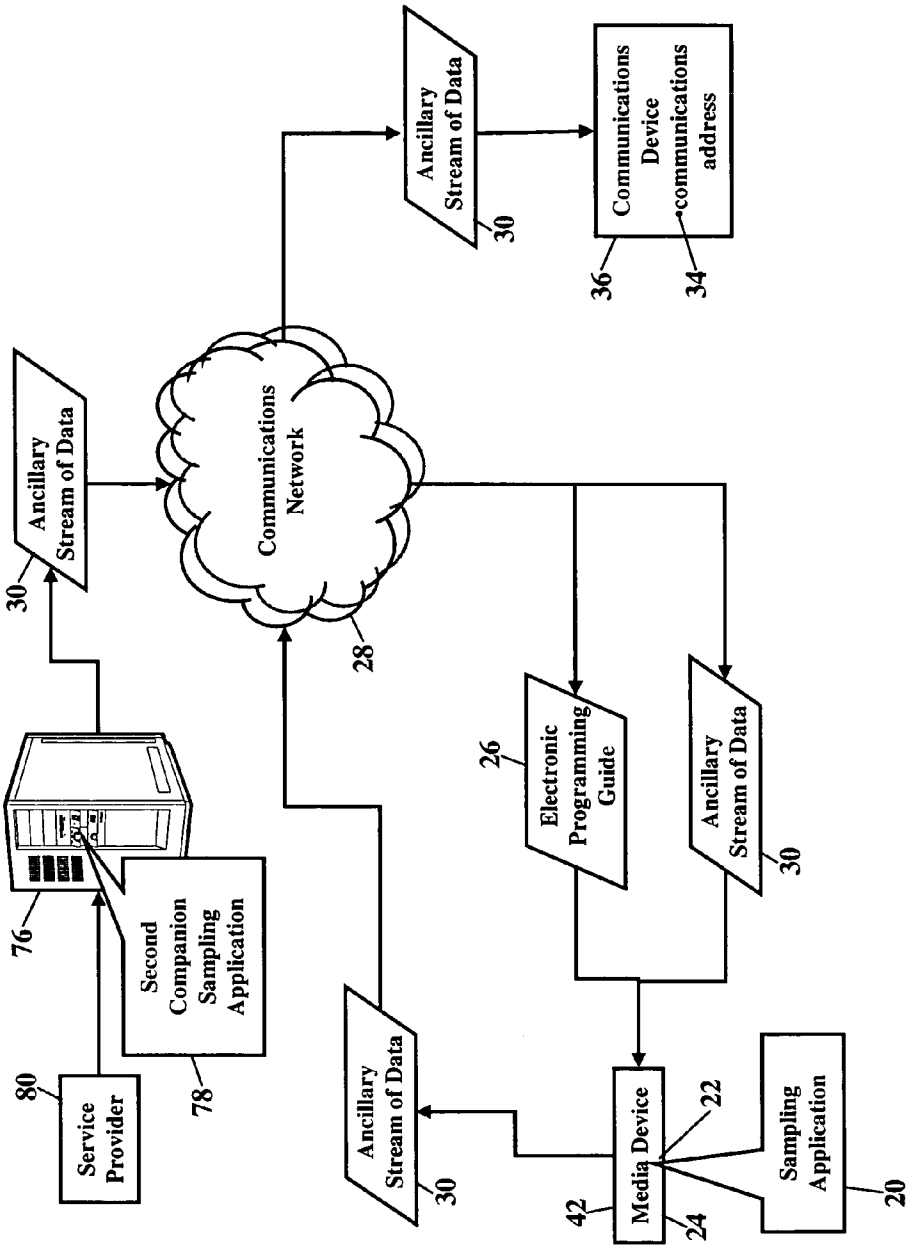

Ancillary Stream of Data
30
Communications Device communications address
36
34
Communications Network
28
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
76
Second Companion Sampling Application
78
80
Service Provider
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
Ancillary Stream of Data
30
42
Media Device
24
22
Sampling Application
20

FIG. 7

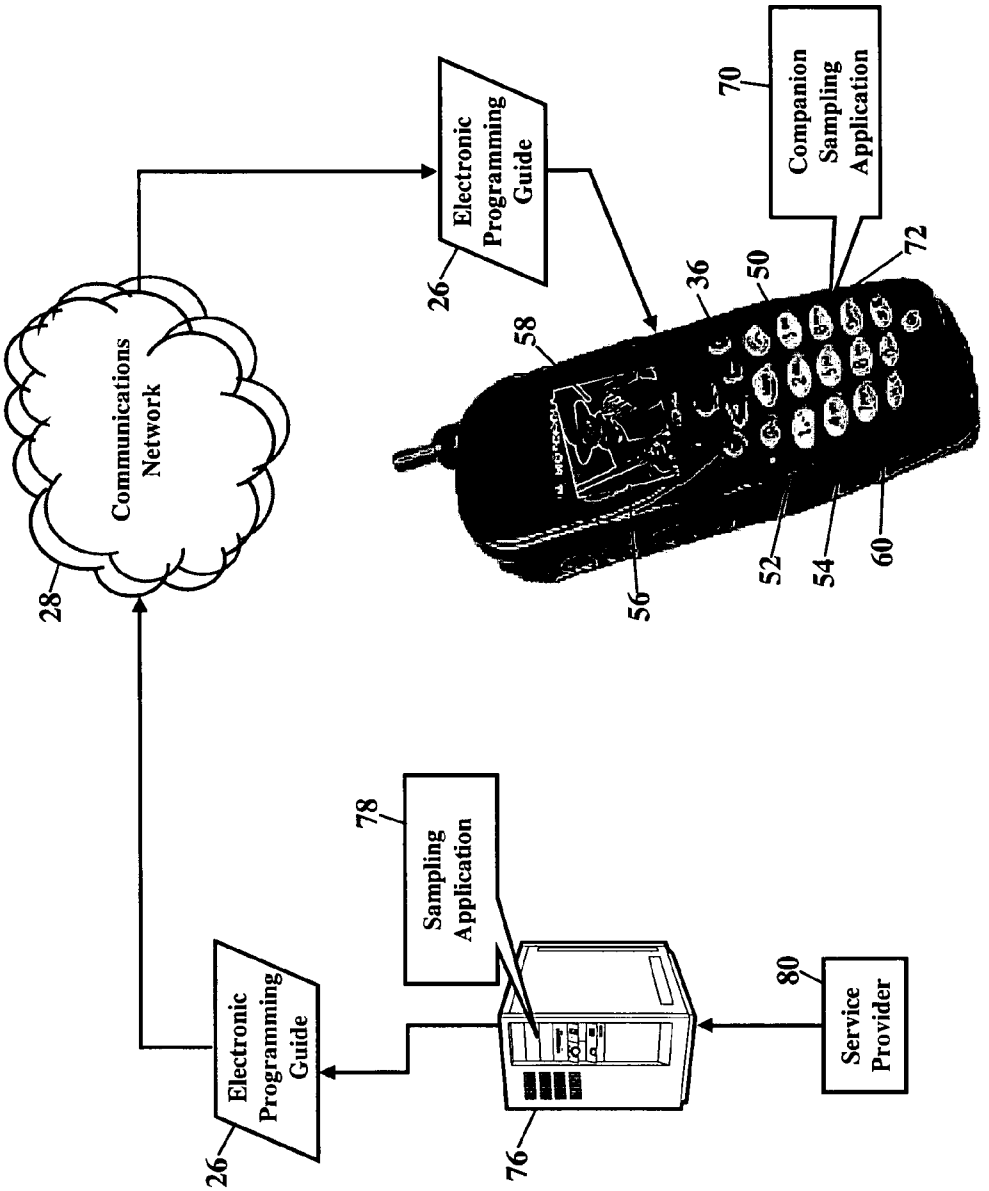

Communications Network
28
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Companion Sampling Application
70
72
50
36
58
52
54
56
60
Sampling Application
78
Electronic Programming Guide
26
76
Service Provider
80

FIG. 8

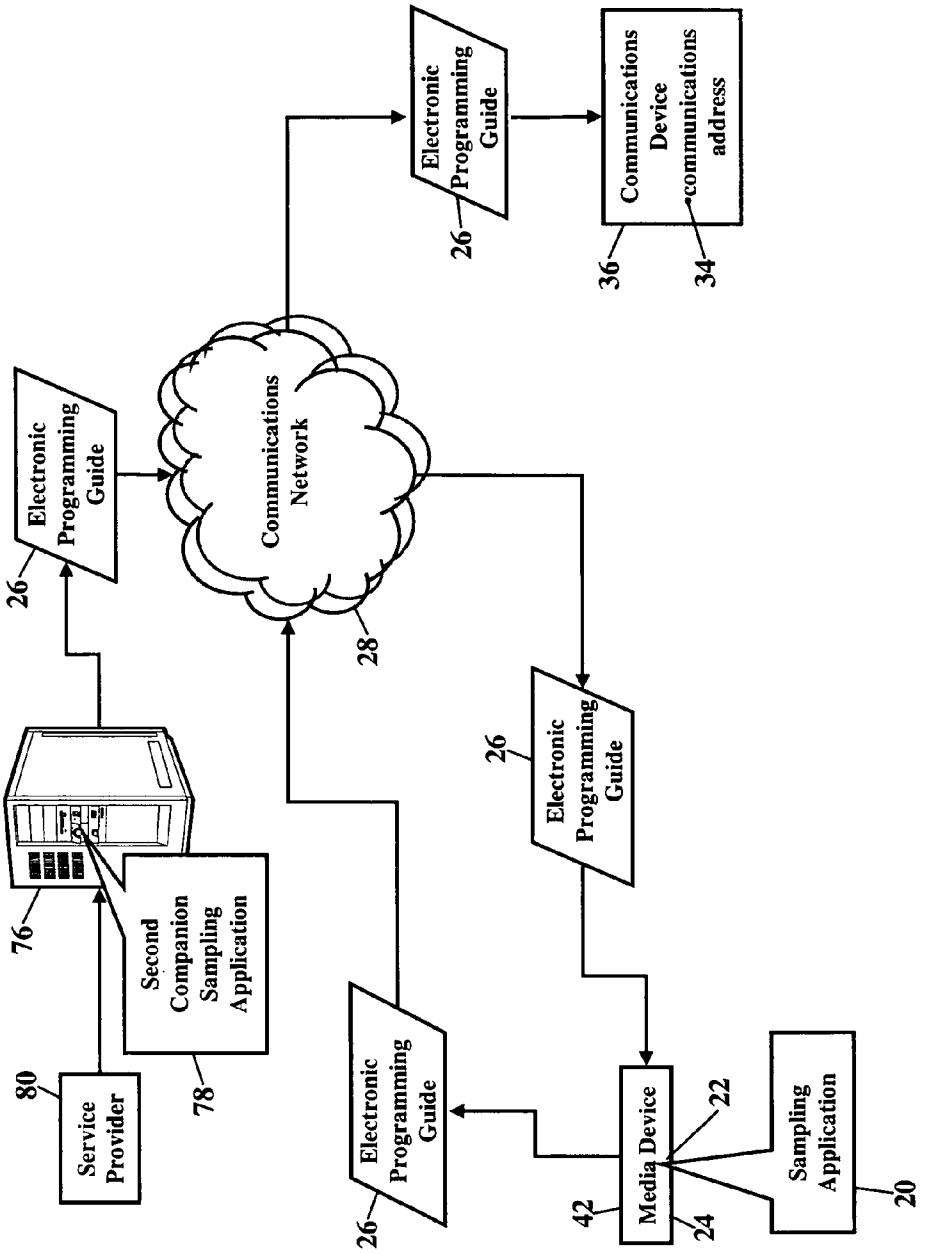

Electronic Programming Guide
26
Communications Device communications address
36
34
Communications Network
28
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Second Companion Sampling Application
78
76
Service Provider
80
Electronic Programming Guide
26
Media Device
42
24
22
Sampling Application
20

FIG. 9

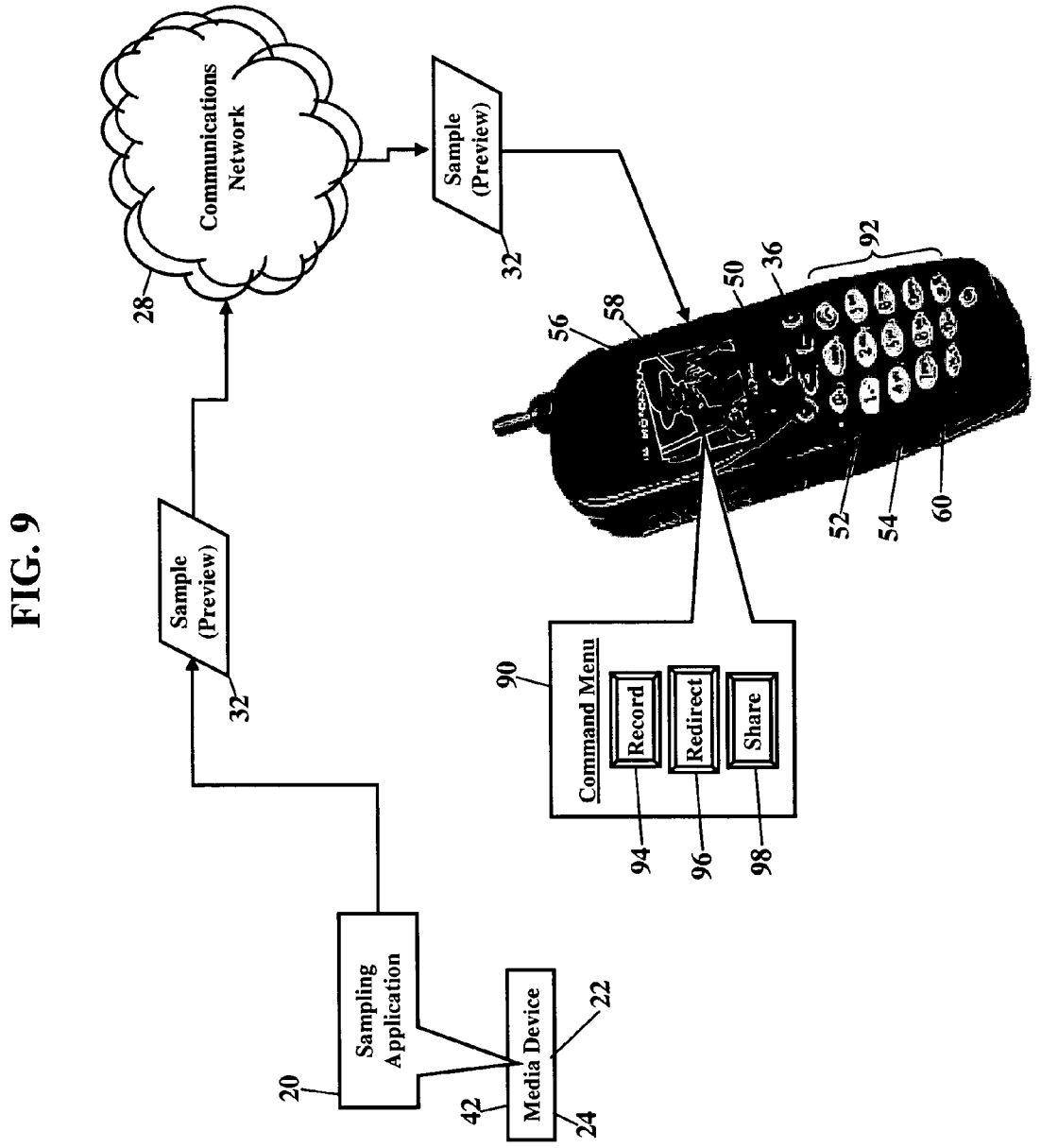

Communications Network
28
Sample (Preview)
32
Sample (Preview)
32
Sampling Application
20
Media Device
22
42
24
Command Menu
Record
Redirect
Share
90
94
96
98
50
36
92
56
58
52
54
60

FIG. 10

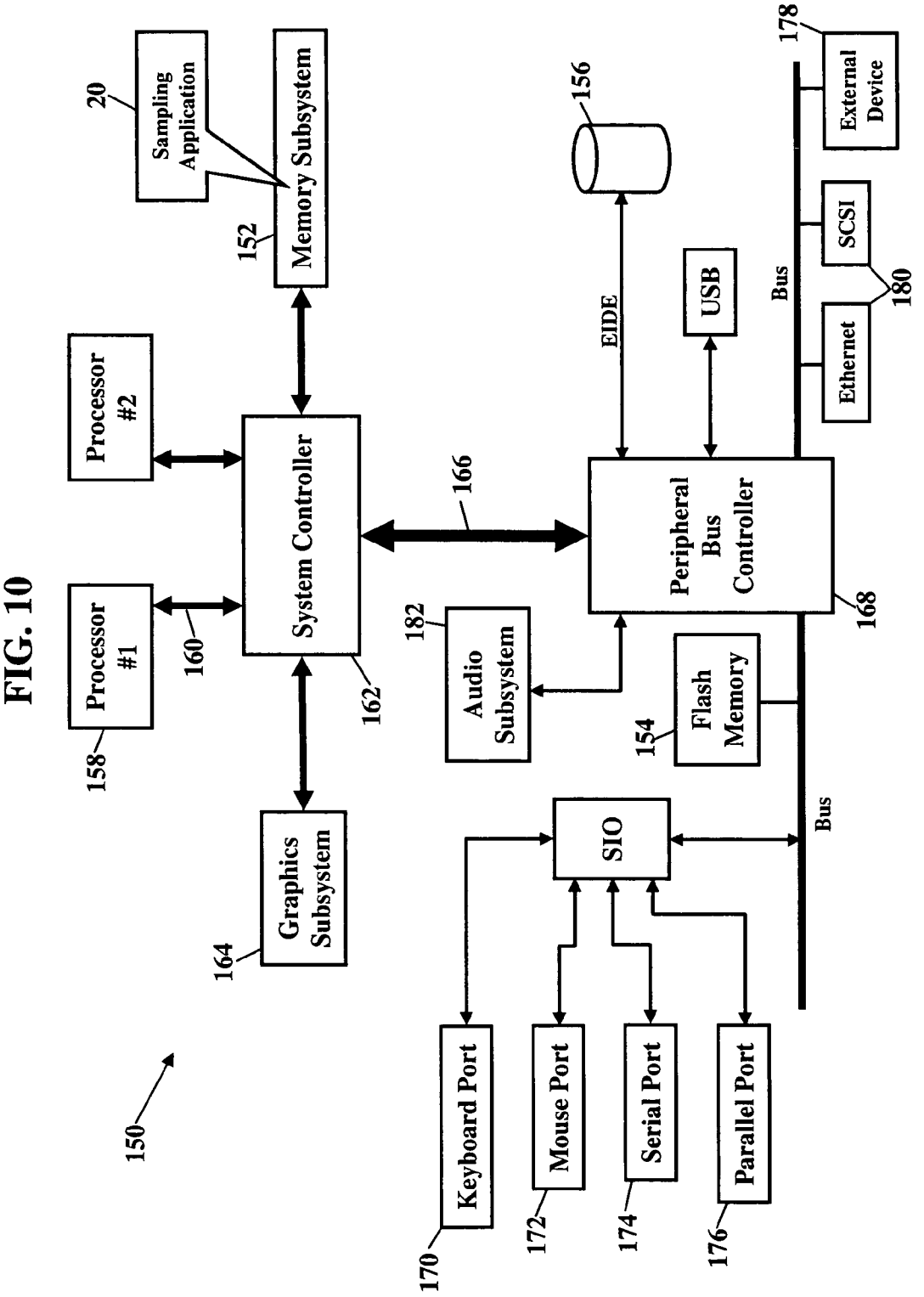

150
20
Sampling Application
152
Memory Subsystem
Processor #2
Processor #1
158
160
System Controller
162
166
164
Graphics Subsystem
182
Audio Subsystem
156
EIDE
USB
Peripheral Bus Controller
168
154
Flash Memory
178
External Device
Bus
SCSI
Ethernet
180
SIO
Bus
170
Keyboard Port
172
Mouse Port
174
Serial Port
176
Parallel Port

FIG. 11

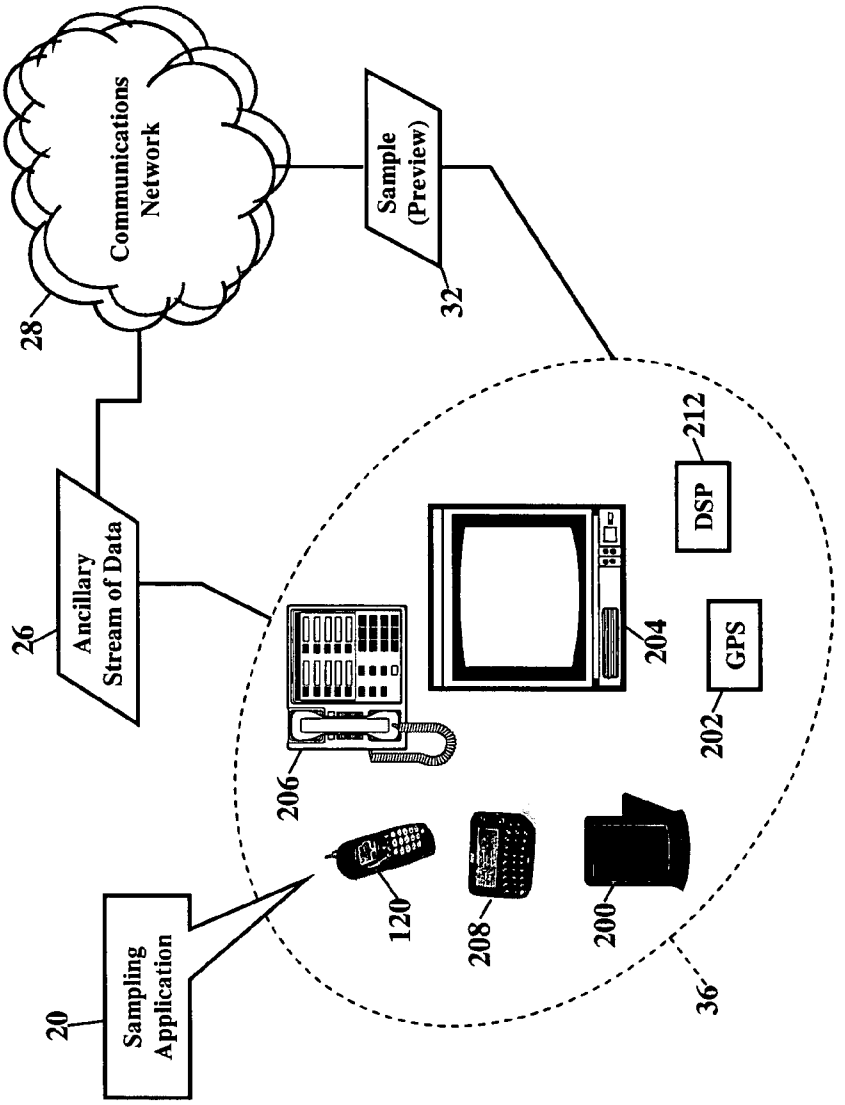

Communications Network
28
Sample (Preview)
32
Ancillary Stream of Data
26
Sampling Application
20
DSP
212
GPS
202
204
206
120
208
200
36

FIG. 12

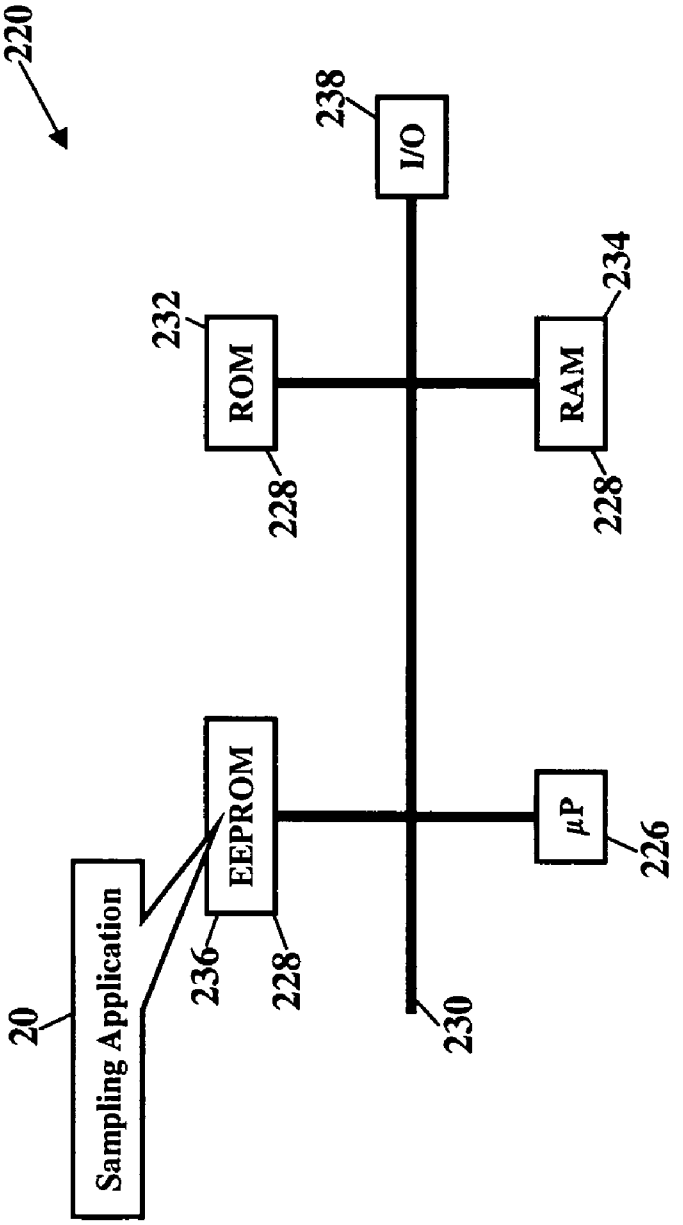

220
238
I/O
232
ROM
234
RAM
228
228
EEPROM
μP
226
236
228
230
20
Sampling Application

FIG. 13

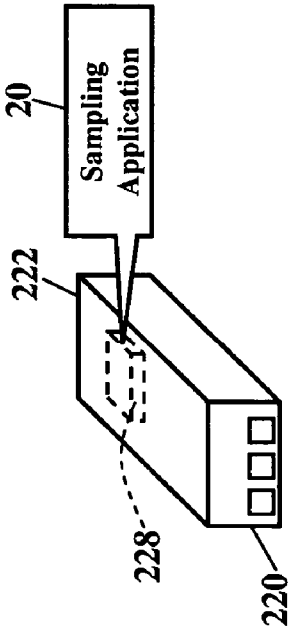

20
Sampling Application
222
228
220

FIG. 14

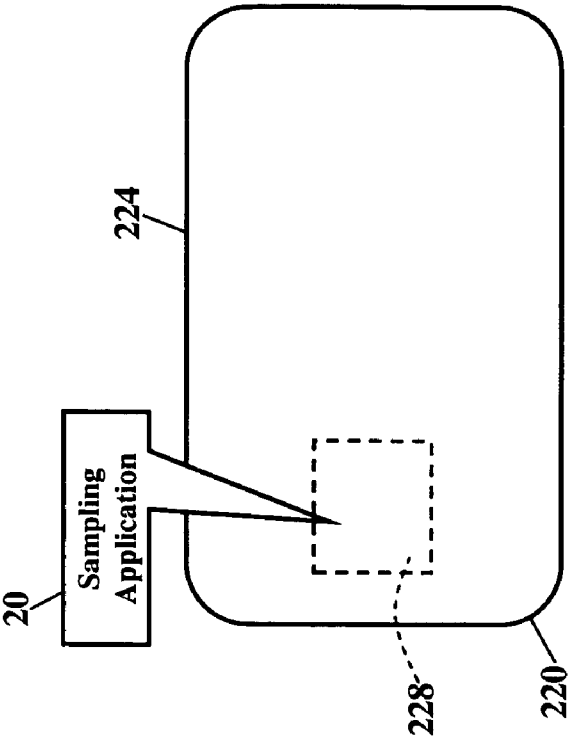

224
20
Sampling Application
228
220

FIG. 15

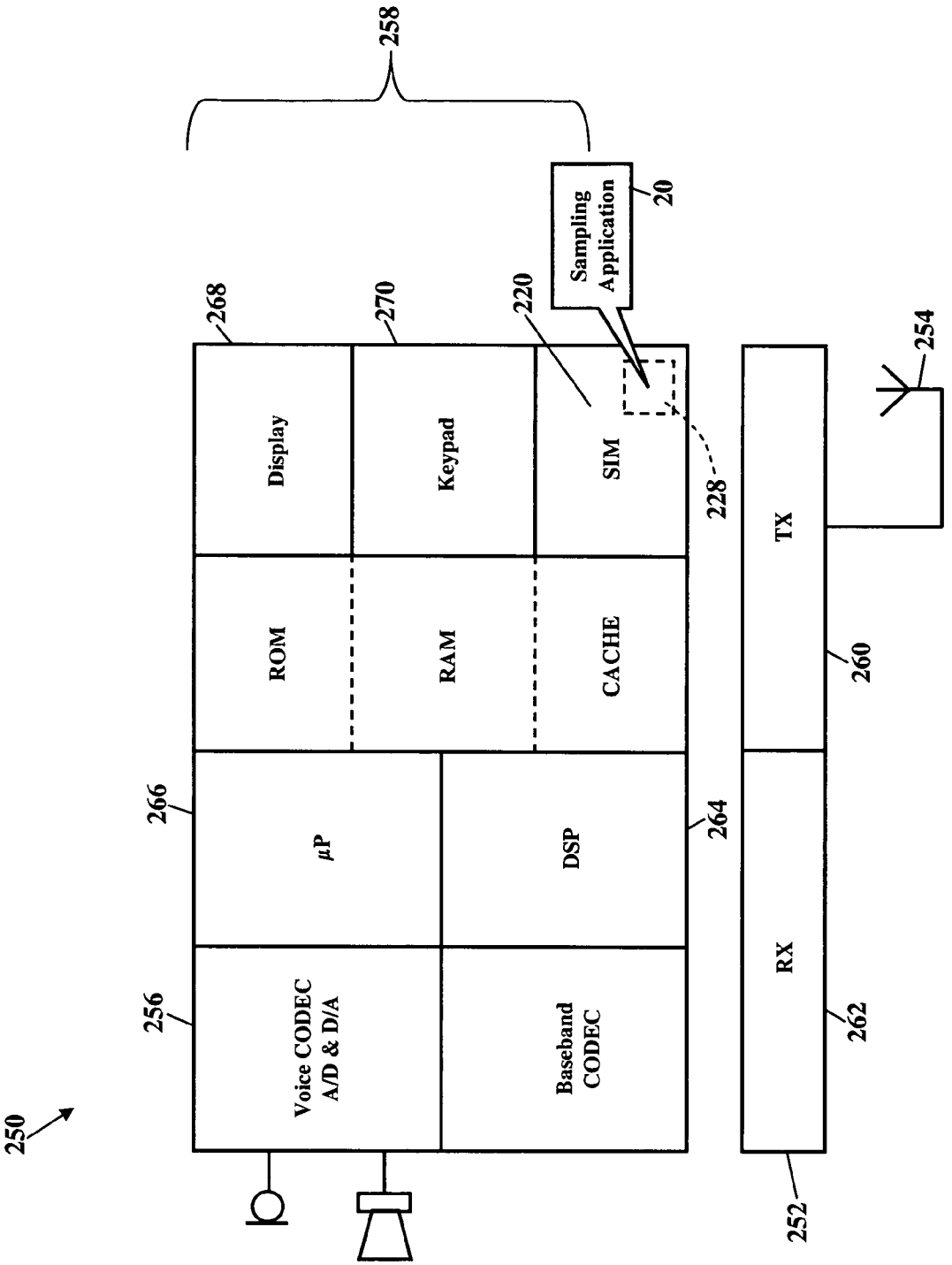

250
256
Voice CODEC A/D & D/A
Baseband CODEC
266
μP
DSP
264
ROM
RAM
CACHE
268
270
220
228
Display
Keypad
SIM
Sampling Application
20
258
RX
TX
252
262
260
254

FIG. 16

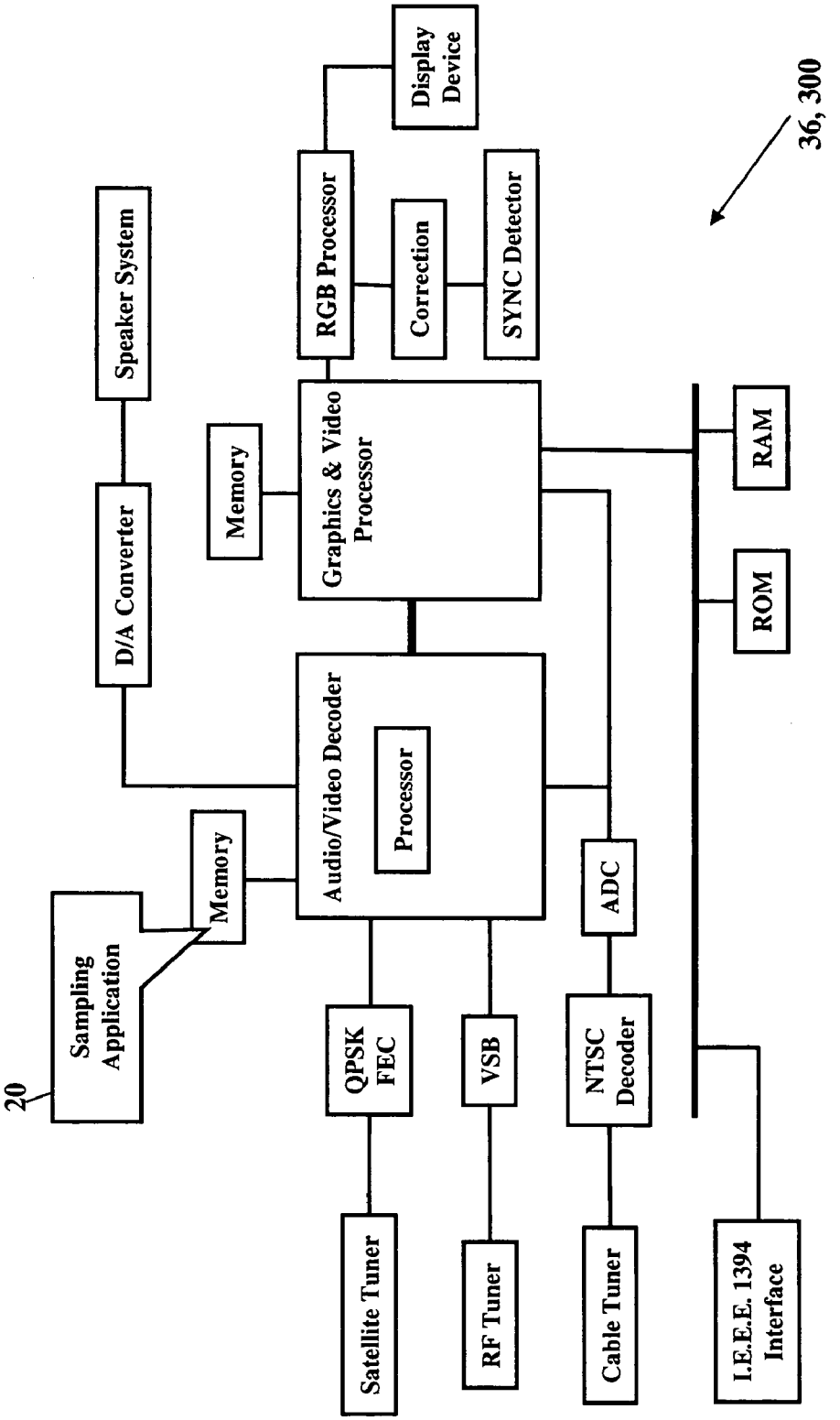

36, 300
Display Device
RGB Processor
Correction
SYNC Detector
Speaker System
Memory
Graphics & Video Processor
RAM
ROM
D/A Converter
Audio/Video Decoder
Processor
Memory
ADC
20
Sampling Application
QPSK FEC
VSB
NTSC Decoder
Satellite Tuner
RF Tuner
Cable Tuner
I.E.E.E. 1394 Interface

FIG. 17

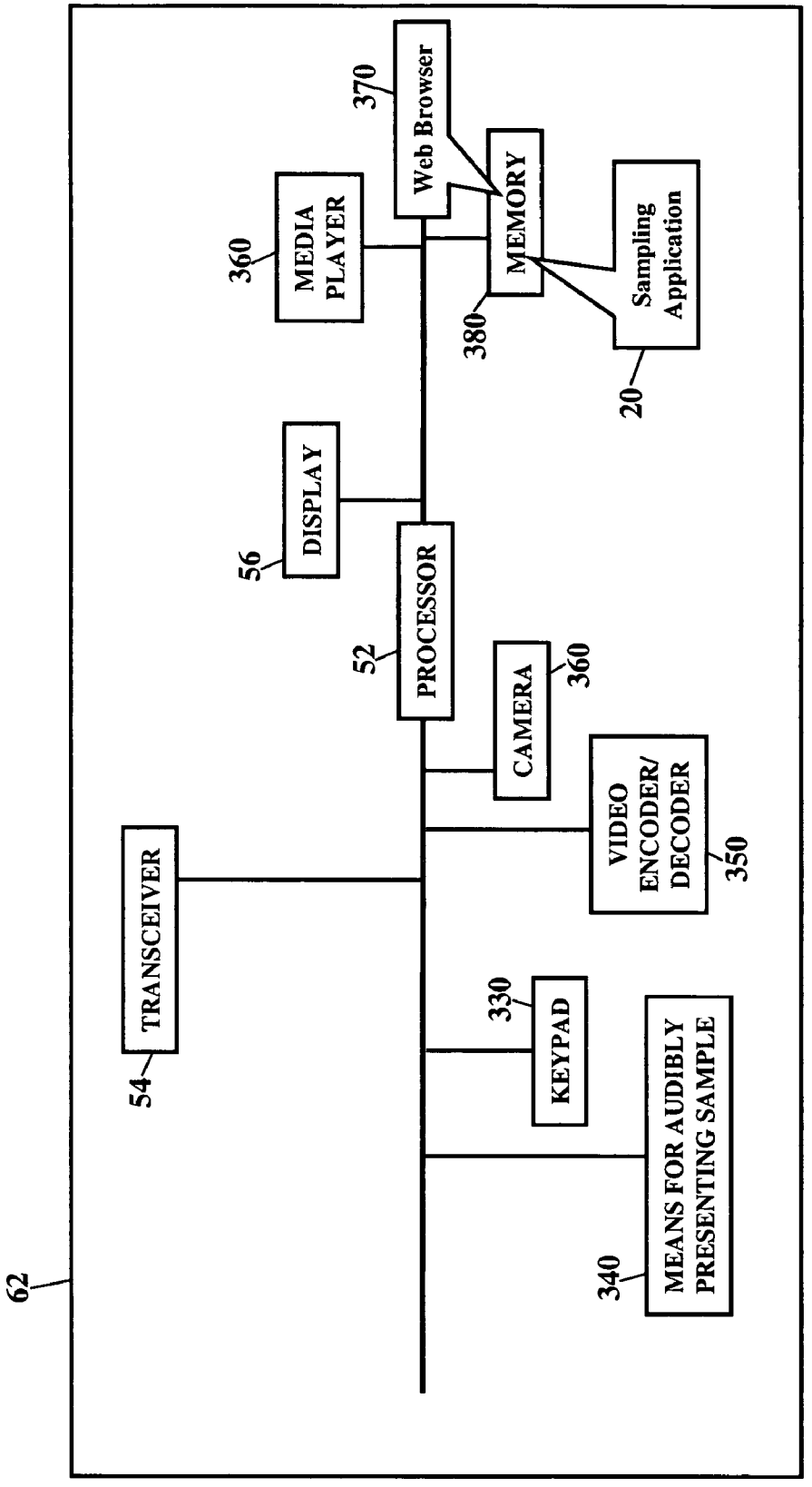
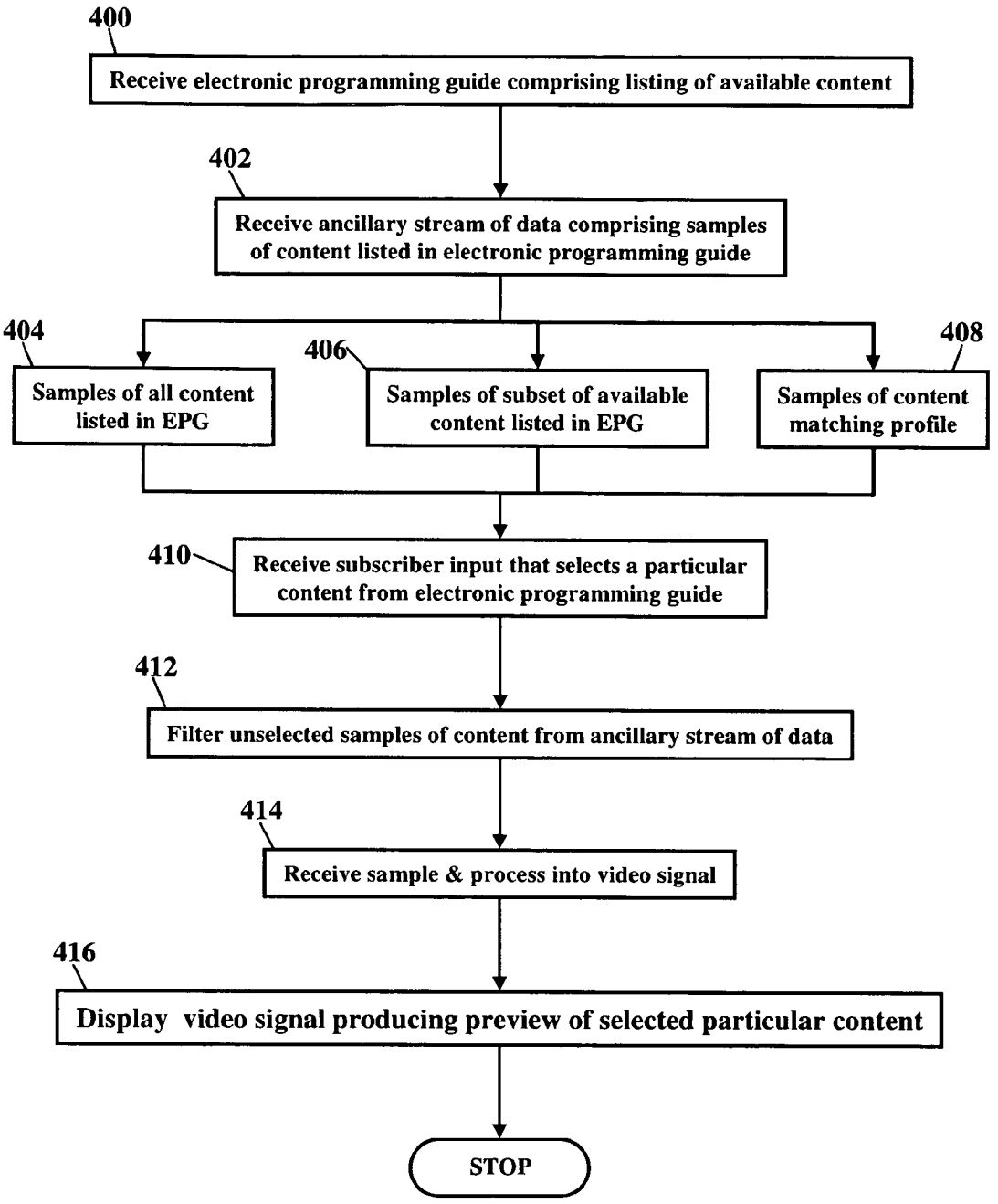

62
TRANSCEIVER
54
PROCESSOR
52
DISPLAY
56
MEDIA PLAYER
360
Web Browser
370
MEMORY
380
Sampling Application
20
CAMERA
360
VIDEO ENCODER/ DECODER
350
KEYPAD
330
MEANS FOR AUDIBLY PRESENTING SAMPLE
340

FIG. 18


400
Receive electronic programming guide comprising listing of available content
402
Receive ancillary stream of data comprising samples of content listed in electronic programming guide
404
Samples of all content listed in EPG
406
Samples of subset of available content listed in EPG
408
Samples of content matching profile
410
Receive subscriber input that selects a particular content from electronic programming guide
412
Filter unselected samples of content from ancillary stream of data
414
Receive sample & process into video signal
416
Display video signal producing preview of selected particular content
STOP

METHODS, SYSTEMS, AND PRODUCTS FOR SAMPLED CONTENT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of the commonly assigned U.S. application Ser. No. 11/156,190 (Attorney Docket BS040438), filed Jun. 17, 2005 and entitled "Methods, Systems, and Products for Providing Sample Content," which is incorporated herein by reference.

NOTICE OF COPYRIGHT PROTECTION

[0002] A portion of this disclosure and its figures contain material subject to copyright protection. The copyright owner has no objection to the facsimile reproduction by anyone of the patent document or the patent disclosure, but otherwise reserves all copyrights whatsoever.

BACKGROUND

[0003] This application generally relates to data processing and to interactive distribution systems and, more particularly, to content sampling.

[0004] Interactive distribution of content is currently achieved using programming guides, e.g., electronic programming guides (EPGs). Current electronic programming guides are generally linear. That is, the subscribing user continuously scrolls along the electronic programming guide and views the programming available at different time slots (or "cells"). Digital cable or digital satellite subscribers might receive a slightly more sophisticated programming guide, but the subscriber still scrolls along the cells or watches a repeating "carrousel" loop of program offerings. The subscriber, regardless of the type of electronic programming guide, must decipher some abbreviated phrasing that cryptically describes the program (such as the name of the program or a brief description of the subject matter). The subscriber is forced to tune to a particular program to truly determine whether the program meets the subscriber's entertainment desires.

[0005] What is needed, however, are improved methods, systems, devices, and products for providing a user with a fuller description of a particular program, thus helping the subscriber gain a better understanding of the subject matter of the program. Ideally, the subscriber would also be provided with a sample of the content, e.g., a video sample of some or all of the listed programs in a programming guide.

SUMMARY

[0006] The aforementioned problems, and other problems, are reduced, according to the exemplary embodiments, using methods, systems, apparatuses, and products that provide sampled content for electronic programming guides. The exemplary embodiments allow a user to view an electronic programming guide and select content for sampling. That is, the exemplary embodiments allow the user to browse, or sample, content listed in the electronic programming guide. As the user browses the electronic programming guide, the user may wish to sample some movie, program, or other content listed in the electronic programming guide. The exemplary embodiments permit the user to highlight, select, or otherwise input a selection that indicates the content to be sampled. The exemplary embodiments, however, deliver that sampled content to any communications address. That is, although the user may view the sample on a television, the exemplary embodiments permit the user to view the sample at any communications device. The exemplary embodiments, for example, allow the user to view the electronic programming guide on a television, while the sampled content is delivered to a communications address associated with a wireless cell phone. As the following paragraphs explain, the sampled content may be additionally or alternatively delivered to any communications device, such as a computer, a personal digital assistant, and/or a remote control. The user is thus not constrained to view both the electronic programming guide and the sampled content at the same device. The exemplary embodiments permit the user, if the user so chooses, to "split" the sampled content from the electronic programming guide and deliver the sampled content to any communications address.

[0007] The exemplary embodiments describe a system for providing sample content. The system has at least one processor for receiving a programming guide and for receiving an ancillary stream of data. The programming guide comprises a listing of available content, and the ancillary stream of data comprises multiple samples of content listed in the programming guide. A user interface receives a user input that selects a particular content from the programming guide. The user interface communicates the user input to the processor. The processor filters unselected samples of content from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content as a preview of the selected particular content.

[0008] In another of the embodiments, a method provides sample content. The method receives a programming guide comprising a listing of available content. An ancillary stream of data is received and includes samples of content listed in the programming guide. A user input is received that selects a particular content from the programming guide. Unselected samples of content are filtered from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content. The sample is processed for preview of the selected particular content.

[0009] In yet another embodiment, a computer program product also provides sampled content. The computer program product includes a computer-readable medium on which instructions are encoded. The instructions command a device to receiving a programming guide and an ancillary stream of data. The programming guide comprises a listing of available content, and the ancillary stream of data comprises samples of content listed in the programming guide. A user input is received that selects a particular content from the programming guide. Unselected samples of content are filtered from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content. The sample is processed for preview of the selected particular content.

[0010] Other systems, methods, and/or computer program products according to the exemplary embodiments will be or become apparent to one with ordinary skill in the art upon review of the following drawings and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional systems, methods, and/or computer program products be included within this description, be within the scope of the claims, and be protected by the accompanying claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] These and other features, aspects, and advantages of the exemplary embodiments are better understood when the following Detailed Description is read with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0012] **FIGS. 1 and 2** are schematics illustrating a sampling application, according to the exemplary embodiments;

[0013] **FIG. 3** is a schematic illustrating a sample communicating to a remote control, according to more exemplary embodiments;

[0014] **FIG. 4** is a schematic illustrating an ancillary stream delivered to a communications device, according to even more exemplary embodiments;

[0015] **FIGS. 5 and 6** are schematics illustrating various routings for the ancillary stream of data, according to more exemplary embodiments;

[0016] **FIGS. 7 and 8** are schematics illustrating routings for an electronic programming guide, according to yet more exemplary embodiments;

[0017] **FIG. 9** is a schematic illustrating a preview command, according to still more exemplary embodiments;

[0018] **FIG. 10** is a block diagram showing the sampling application residing in a processor-controlled system, according to even more exemplary embodiments;

[0019] **FIGS. 11-17** are schematics illustrating the sampling application operating within various communications devices, according to more exemplary embodiments; and

[0020] **FIG. 18** is a flowchart illustrating a method of providing sample content, according to still more exemplary embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0021] The exemplary embodiments will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings. The exemplary embodiments may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein. These embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those of ordinary skill in the art. Moreover, all statements herein reciting embodiments, as well as specific examples thereof, are intended to encompass both structural and functional equivalents thereof. Additionally, it is intended that such equivalents include both currently known equivalents as well as equivalents developed in the future (i.e., any elements developed that perform the same function, regardless of structure).

[0022] Thus, for example, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that the diagrams, schematics, illustrations, and the like represent conceptual views or processes illustrating the exemplary embodiments. The functions of the various elements shown in the figures may be provided through the use of dedicated hardware as well as hardware capable of executing associated software. Similarly, any switches shown in the figures are conceptual only. Their function may be carried out through the operation of program logic, through dedicated logic, through the interaction of program control and dedicated logic, or even manually, the particular technique being selectable by the entity implementing this invention. Those of ordinary skill in the art further understand that the exemplary hardware, software, processes, methods, and/or operating systems described herein are for illustrative purposes and, thus, are not intended to be limited to any particular named manufacturer.

[0023] According to exemplary embodiments, methods, systems, and products provide sample content from electronic programming guides. The exemplary embodiments allow a user to view an electronic programming guide and select content for sampling. That is, the exemplary embodiments allow the user to browse, or sample, content listed in the electronic programming guide. As the user browses the electronic programming guide, the user may wish to sample some movie, program, or other content listed in the electronic programming guide. The exemplary embodiments permit the user to highlight, select, or otherwise input a selection that indicates the content to be sampled. The exemplary embodiments, however, deliver that sampled content to any communications address. That is, although the user may view the sample on a television, the exemplary embodiments permit the user to view the sample at any communications device. The exemplary embodiments, for example, allow the user to view the electronic programming guide on a television, while the sampled content is delivered to a communications address associated with a wireless cell phone. As the following paragraphs explain, the sampled content may be additionally or alternatively delivered to any communications device, such as a computer, a personal digital assistant, and/or a remote control. The user is thus not constrained to view both the electronic programming guide and the sampled content at the same device. The exemplary embodiments permit the user, if the user so chooses, to "split" the sampled content from the electronic programming guide and deliver the sampled content to any communications address.

[0024] **FIGS. 1 and 2** are schematics illustrating exemplary embodiments. According to one embodiment, a sampling application **20** is stored in memory **22** of a media device **24**. Some or all portions of the sampling application **20** may be stored in memory in a remote computer server, as will be detailed later. Although the media device **24** is generically shown, the media device **24**, as will be later explained, may be a computer, a television, a television integrated with a decoder (or set-top box), a personal digital assistant (PDA), a cordless/cellular/EP phone, or any other wireline/wireless communications device. The media device **24** receives a programming guide, e.g., an electronic programming guide (EPG) **26** from a communications network **28**. The electronic programming guide **26** comprises an electronic listing of available content, such as movies, programs, music, games, or other content that is currently playing, playing at a scheduled time in the future, or available on demand for viewing at any time. The electronic programming guide **26** may additionally or alternatively comprise a listing of available channels and the programming available on each channel. It should be appreciated that the programming guide received by the media device **24** is not limited to an EPG but may be any other type of programming guide. The media device **24** also receives an ancillary stream **30** of data via the communications network **28**. The ancillary stream **30** of data comprises samples of

content listed in the electronic programming guide **26**. As the following paragraphs further explain, the sampling application **20** provides a sample **32**, or preview, of content listed in the electronic programming guide **26**. That is, as a user reviews the electronic programming guide **26**, the sampling application **20** processes the ancillary stream **30** of data to provide a preview **32** of content listed in the electronic programming guide **26**. The sampling application **20** then communicates that sample **32** or preview to any communications address **34** the user specifies. **FIG. 1**, for example, illustrates the sampling application **20** communicating the sample **32** to a communications device **36**. The sample **32** communicates via the communications network **28** to the communications address **34** associated with the communications device **36**.

[**0025**] **FIG. 2** is a schematic further illustrating exemplary embodiments. Here the media device **24** is shown as an integrated television **38** and decoder **40**. The decoder **40**, however, may be a separate component, commonly termed a set-top box. A processor **42** receives the electronic programming guide **26** and the ancillary stream **30** of data. The processor then causes the electronic programming guide **26** to be visually presented via a display device **44**. As a subscriber browses the electronic programming guide **26**, the subscriber can preview content. The processor **42** receives a subscriber input that selects a particular content from the electronic programming guide **26**. The subscriber, for example, places an on-screen cursor **46** over listed content. The sampling application **20** filters and processes the ancillary stream **30** of data to produce the sample **32** of the content listed in the electronic programming guide **26**. How the sampling application filters and processes the ancillary stream **30** of data is described in more detail in the commonly assigned U.S. application Ser. No. 11/156,190 (Attorney Docket BS040438), filed Jun. 17, 2005 and entitled "Methods, Systems, and Products for Providing Sample Content," which is incorporated herein by reference.

[**0026**] The sampling application **20** then communicates the sample **32**. The sampling application **20** includes computer code that instructs the processor **42** to communicate the sample **32** to any communications address **34** the user specifies. The processor **42** may communicate with one or more communications interfaces or transceivers **48** that permit access to the communications network **28**. The sample **32** is communicated via the communications network **28** to the communications address (shown as reference numeral **34** in **FIG. 1**) associated with the communications device **36**. **FIG. 2**, for example, illustrates the communications device **36** as a wireless phone **50**. The wireless phone **50** includes an auxiliary processor **52** communicating with an auxiliary transceiver **54** and with a display **56**. The auxiliary transceiver **54** wirelessly receives the sample **32**, and the auxiliary processor **54** processes the sample **32** into a video signal. That video signal is communicated to the display **56**. The display **56** visually presents the video signal as a preview **58** of the selected particular content. If the communications device **36** includes audio processing circuitry **60**, audio portions of the received sample **32** are processed and audibly presented as audible, sampled content.

[**0027**] **FIG. 2**, for example, shows the cursor **46** hovering over the particular content "True Grit." The sampling application **20** filters and processes the ancillary stream **30** of data to produce the sample **32** of the content "True Grit." The sampling application **20** may produce an actual video clip and/or any descriptive information describing the content "True Grit" (such as actors/actresses, director/producer, duration, start/stop times, ratings, textual description, and other information that describes the movie). The sample **32** routes via the communications network **28** to the communications address associated with the wireless phone **50**. The wireless phone **50** receives, processes, and displays the sample **32** as the preview **58** of the movie "True Grit." The user of the wireless phone **50** may watch/listen to the preview **58** and decide if the particular content satisfies the user's expectations. If the user chooses, instead, to sample other content, the user moves the on-screen cursor **46** and selects other listed content to similarly experience other samples.

[**0028**] The communications network **28** may have any configuration. The communications network **28**, for example, may be a cable network operating in the radio-frequency domain and/or the Internet Protocol (IP) domain. The communications network **32**, however, may also include coaxial cables, copper wires, fiber optic lines, and/or hybrid-coaxial lines. The communications network **28** may be a distributed computing network, such as the Internet (sometimes alternatively known as the "World Wide Web"), an intranet, a local-area network (LAN), and/or a wide-area network (WAN). The communications network **32** may even include wireless portions utilizing any portion of the electromagnetic spectrum and any signaling standard (such as the I.E.E.E. 802 family of standards, GSM/CDMA/TDMA or any cellular standard, and/or the ISM band).

[**0029**] The preview **58**, displayed at the wireless phone **50**, may have any resolution. The typically small screen area of the display **56**, however, facilitates a low resolution sample to suit the display **56**. An even lower resolution sample, however, could be communicated that occupies a smaller portion of the viewable area of the display **56**. Any resolution, in fact, may be communicated that allows the user to decide whether the particular content satisfies the user's expectations.

[**0030**] **FIG. 3** is a schematic further illustrating exemplary embodiments. Here the sample **32** is communicated to a remote control **62**. The remote control **62** is another of the communications devices **36** that may receive the sample **32**. The remote control **62** operates to remotely control the media device **24** (still shown as the integrated television **38** and decoder **40**). The remote control **62**, however, may remotely control additional devices or alternatively control other devices. The remote control **62** is associated with the communications address **34**, so the sample **32** communicates from the sampling application **20** via the communications network **28**.

[**0031**] The remote control **62** receives the sample **32**. The remote control **62** includes the auxiliary processor **52** communicating with the auxiliary transceiver **54**. The auxiliary processor **52** and the auxiliary transceiver **54** are tailored to suit the needs and functions of the remote control **62**. The auxiliary transceiver **54** wirelessly receives the sample **32**, and the auxiliary processor **54** processes the sample **32** as a video signal. The remote control **62** may also include the display **56**, and the display **56** visually presents the video signal as the preview **58** of the selected particular content. If

the remote control **62** includes the audio processing circuitry **60**, audio portions of the received sample **32** are processed and audibly presented as audible, sampled content.

[0032] **FIG. 3**, then, illustrates how a user may preview content at the remote control **62**. When the user places or hovers the cursor **46** above the particular content "True Grit," the sampling application **20** filters and processes the ancillary stream **30** of data to produce the sample **32** of the content "True Grit." The sample **32** routes via the communications network **28** to the remote control **62**. The remote control **62** receives, processes, and displays the sample **32** on the display **56** as the preview **58** of the movie "True Grit." Here, then, the user observes the electronic programming guide **26** on the media device **24** (e.g., the television **38**), while the user observes the preview **58** at the remote control **62**. If the preview **58** of "True Grit" does not satisfy the user, the user may move the on-screen cursor **46** and select other listed content for sampling.

[0033] **FIG. 4** is a schematic illustrating the ancillary stream **30** being delivered to the communications device **36**, according to more exemplary embodiments. Here the electronic programming guide **26** is delivered to the media device **24** (e.g., the television **38**), while the ancillary stream **30** of data is delivered to the communications device **36**. The communications device **36** is shown as the wireless phone **50**. Remember, the ancillary stream **30** of data comprises samples of content listed in the electronic programming guide **26**. So, here, while the user views the electronic programming guide **26** on the media device **24** (such as the television **38** in **FIGS. 2 and 3**), the samples are separately delivered to the user's wireless phone **50**. That is, the user views the electronic programming guide **26** on the television, while the samples are delivered and viewed on the user's wireless phone **50**. This exemplary embodiment, then, allows the user to preview content at the wireless phone **50**. The wireless phone **50** is only one example of the communications devices that the user may use to remotely preview samples of content.

[0034] As shown in detail in **FIG. 4**, the sampling application **20** may be stored in the memory **22** of the media device **24**. A companion sampling application **70** may be stored in memory **72** of the communications device **36**. The sampling application **20** and the companion sampling application **70** may have the same or different computer code, but they cooperate together and/or communicate between each other. As **FIG. 4** illustrates, the media device **24** receives the electronic programming guide **26** via the communications network **28**, while the ancillary stream **30** of data is communicated via the communications network **28** to the communications device **36**.

[0035] The communications device **36** receives the ancillary stream **30** of data. **FIG. 4** illustrates the communications device **36** as the wireless phone **50**. The wireless phone **50** includes the auxiliary processor **52** communicating with the auxiliary transceiver **54** and with the display **56**. The auxiliary transceiver **54** wirelessly receives the ancillary stream **30** of data, and the ancillary stream **30** of data communicates to the auxiliary processor **52**. When the user places the on-screen cursor **46** over the content listed in the electronic programming guide **26**, the sampling application **20** communicates that user input **74** to the communications address associated with the wireless phone **50**. The user input **74** is received by the wireless phone **50**, and the companion sampling application **70** filters and processes the ancillary stream **30** of data to produce a sample of the content selected by the user from the electronic programming guide **26**. The auxiliary processor **52** then processes the sample as a video signal, and the display **56** visually presents the video signal as the preview **58** of the selected content. Again, when the user places or hovers the cursor **46** above the content "True Grit" shown in the electronic programming guide **26**, a preview of the movie appears on the display **56** at the wireless phone **50**. If the user wishes to preview other content, the user need only move the cursor **46** and select other listed content for sampling.

[0036] **FIGS. 5 and 6** are schematics illustrating various routings for the ancillary stream **30** of data, according to more exemplary embodiments. As **FIG. 4** illustrated, the ancillary stream **30** of data communicates via the communications network **28** to the communications device **36** (e.g., the wireless phone **50**). **FIG. 5** illustrates that the ancillary stream **30** of data may be routed from a service provider's server **76** to the communications device **36**. The service provider's server **76** may even store and execute a second companion sampling application **78**, and the second companion sampling application **78** cooperates with, and/or communicates with, the sampling application **20** and the companion sampling application **70**. Here, then, the service provider **80** routes the electronic programming guide to the media device (shown, respectively, as reference numerals **26** and **24** in **FIG. 4**), while the service provider **80** routes ancillary stream **30** of data to the communications address associated with the communications device **36** (e.g., the wireless phone **50**).

[0037] **FIG. 6** illustrates another routing. Here the ancillary stream **30** of data routes to the media device **24**, and the media device **24** then forwards the ancillary stream **30** of data to the communications device **36**. As **FIG. 6** illustrates, the service provider **80** routes both the electronic programming guide **26** and the ancillary stream **30** of data to the media device **24**. The media device **24** then forwards the ancillary stream **30** of data to the communications device **36**. The sampling application **20**, operating in the media device **24**, may include code that instructs the processor **42** to process, condition, or otherwise alter the ancillary stream **30** of data to suit the hardware and/or communication medium between the media device **24** and the communications device **36**. The sampling application **20**, for example, may alter a resolution or bit rate to compensate for bandwidth limitations.

[0038] **FIGS. 7 and 8** are schematics illustrating alternative routings for the electronic programming guide **26**, according to yet more exemplary embodiments. **FIG. 7** illustrates that the electronic programming guide **26** may be directly routed from the service provider's server **76** to the communications device **36**. The service provider **80** routes the electronic programming guide to the communications address associated with the communications device **36** (e.g., the wireless phone **50**). The second companion sampling application **78**, operating in the server **76**, may include code that processes, conditions, or otherwise alters the electronic programming guide **26** to suit the hardware capabilities and/or the communication medium between the server **76** and the communications device **36**. The second companion sampling application **78**, for example, may alter the resolu-

tion or the bit rate of the electronic programming guide **26** to compensate for bandwidth limitations.

[**0039**] **FIG. 8** illustrates yet another routing. Here the electronic programming guide **26** routes to the media device **24**, and the media device **24** then forwards the electronic programming guide **26** to the communications device **36**. The sampling application **20**, operating in the media device **24**, may include code that instructs the processor **42** to process, condition, or otherwise alter the electronic programming guide **26** to suit the hardware and/or communication medium between the media device **24** and the communications device **36**. Perhaps, for example, the media device **24** and the communications device **36** communicate via an RF or infrared link (or any other portion of the electromagnetic spectrum), and the sampling application **20** conditions the electronic programming guide **26** to suit the bandwidth capabilities (or "bottlenecks") of this link.

[**0040**] As the above paragraphs mention, the exemplary embodiments may compensate for communications bottlenecks. If any portion of the communications network **28** experiences a bandwidth bottleneck, the exemplary embodiments may process the electronic programming guide **26** and/or the ancillary stream **30** of data to account for this bottleneck. If, for example, the communications network **28** utilizes a wireless I.E.E.E. 802 portion, the permissible bit rate over this wireless link may be slower than higher bandwidth portions of the communications network **28**. The exemplary embodiments, then, may reduce bit rates to compensate for this bottleneck. The exemplary embodiments may also compensate or tailor for hardware capabilities, such as the screen size of the display **56** of the communications device **36**. Should the display **56** require a low resolution video signal, then the exemplary embodiments can tailor electronic programming guide **26** and/or the ancillary stream **30** of data to suit the display **56** capabilities.

[**0041**] **FIG. 9** is a schematic illustrating a preview command, according to still more exemplary embodiments. As the user views the preview **58**, the user may wish to take some action involving the previewed content. Suppose, again, that the user is previewing the movie "True Grit" on the display **56** of the wireless phone **50**. The user may wish to view the preview **58** at another destination having a larger display. The exemplary embodiments, then, allow the user to redirect or transfer the preview **58** to any destination. Similarly, should the user decide to record the preview **58**, or the entire content, the exemplary embodiments allow the user to issue recording commands. The exemplary embodiments also allow the user to share the preview **58** with friends and family, simply by entering additional communications addresses or destinations.

[**0042**] **FIG. 9**, then, illustrates a command menu **90**. The command menu **90** is a graphical user interface that presents options to the user. The command menu **90** is invoked by a command or keypad sequence entered via the communications device **36** (in this example, the wireless phone **50** has a keypad **92**, and the user enters a key sequence on the keypad **92**). The command menu **90**, however, may also be invoked using the sampling application **20** at the media device **24**. **FIG. 9** shows the command menu **90** displayed on the display **56** of the communications device **36**, although the command menu **90** may also be displayed at some other destination (such as at the television **38** shown in **FIG. 2**). While **FIG. 9** shows the command menu **90** enlarged for clarity, the command menu **90** could be a tile or window appearing along with the preview **58**.

[**0043**] The command menu **90** visually and/or audibly presents options. As the above paragraphs mention, the user may desire to record the preview **58** or the entire content. The command menu **90** may include a record command button **94** that permits recording the sample **32**. When the user highlights or otherwise selects the record command button **94**, the command menu **90** may prompt the user to choose a storage destination. That is, the sample **32** may be locally stored on memory of the communications device **36** (such as the wireless phone **50**). The sample **32** may also be stored in memory of the media device **24**, and/or the sample **32** may be remotely stored at any destination accessible via the communications network **28**. Not only may the preview sample **32** be stored, by the user may also wish to store the entire content (e.g., the user may wish to store the video preview of "True Grit" and/or the entire movie). The entire content file may be locally or remotely stored, in much the same way as the sample **32**.

[**0044**] The user may also choose to redirect the sample **32**. Because the communications device **36** may have a small display screen, monochromatic color capabilities, or limited audio/video capabilities, the user may wish to view the preview **58** at another destination. The wireless phone **50**, for example, typically has a small screen size, so the user may wish to redirect the sample **32** to some other destination. The command menu **90** may include a redirect command button **96** that permits redirecting the sample **32** to another destination. The redirect command button **96** instructs the sampling application **20**, operating in the media device **24**, to redirect or transfer the sample **32** to another destination. When the user highlights or otherwise selects the redirect command button **96**, the command menu **90** may prompt the user to input one or more communications addresses associated with an alternate destination. The communications device **36** (e.g., the wireless phone **50**) sends a message to the sampling application **20**, and the message instructs the sampling application **20** to redirect the sample **32** to the chosen destination. The command menu **90** may also visually or audibly present a sub-menu that lists recently or frequently selected destinations, and the user may select an alternate destination from the list.

[**0045**] The sample **32** may also be shared. Perhaps the user would like other people to view the preview **58** to ensure the content meets a group's expectations. The user may wish that friends also view the preview **58**. The command menu **90**, then, may include a share command button **98**, and the share command button **98** permits the user to share the sample **32** with other destinations. When the user highlights or otherwise selects the share command button **98**, the command menu **90** may prompt the user to input one or more communications addresses associated with the shared recipients. The communications device **36** (e.g., the wireless phone **50**) sends a message to the sampling application **20**, and the message instructs the sampling application **20** to send copies of the sample **32** to the shared recipient's communications address. The command menu **90** may also visually or audibly present a sub-menu that lists recently or frequently selected shared destinations, and the user may select a shared destination from the list.

[0046] **FIG. 10** depicts another possible operating environment for the exemplary embodiments. **FIG. 10** is a block diagram showing the sampling application **20** residing in a processor-controlled system **150** (such as the media device **24** or the communications device **36**). **FIG. 10**, however, may also represent a block diagram of any computer or communications device in which the sampling application **20** may operate. The sampling application **20** operates within a system memory device. The sampling application **20**, for example, is shown residing in a memory subsystem **152**. The sampling application **20**, however, could also reside in flash memory **154** or peripheral storage device **156**. The computer system **150** also has one or more central processors **158** executing an operating system. The operating system, as is well known, has a set of instructions that control the internal functions of the computer system **150**. A system bus **160** communicates signals, such as data signals, control signals, and address signals, between the central processor **158** and a system controller **162**. The system controller **162** provides a bridging function between the one or more central processors **158**, a graphics subsystem **164**, the memory subsystem **152**, and a PCI (Peripheral Controller Interface) bus **166**. The PCI bus **166** is controlled by a Peripheral Bus Controller **168**. The Peripheral Bus Controller **168** is an integrated circuit that serves as an input/output hub for various peripheral ports. These peripheral ports could include, for example, a keyboard port **170**, a mouse port **172**, a serial port **174**, and/or a parallel port **176** for a video display unit, one or more external device ports **178**, and networking ports **180** (such as USB, SCSI, or Ethernet). The Peripheral Bus Controller **168** could also include an audio subsystem **182**. Those of ordinary skill in the art understand that the program, processes, methods, and systems described herein are not limited to any particular computer system or computer hardware.

[0047] One example of the central processor **158** is a microprocessor. Advanced Micro Devices, Inc., for example, manufactures a full line of ATHLON™ microprocessors (ATHLON™ is a trademark of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc., One AMD Place, P.O. Box 3453, Sunnyvale, Calif. 94088-3453, 408.732.2400, 800.538.8450, www.amd.com). The Intel Corporation also manufactures a family of X86 and P86 microprocessors (Intel Corporation, 2200 Mission College Blvd., Santa Clara, Calif. 95052-8119, 408.765.8080, www.intel.com). Other manufacturers also offer microprocessors. Such other manufacturers include Motorola, Inc. (1303 East Algonquin Road, P.O. Box A3309 Schaumburg, Ill. 60196, www.Motorola.com), International Business Machines Corp. (New Orchard Road, Armonk, N.Y. 10504, (914) 499-1900, www.ibm.com), and Transmeta Corp. (3940 Freedom Circle, Santa Clara, Calif. 95054, www.transmeta.com). Those skilled in the art further understand that the program, processes, methods, and systems described herein are not limited to any particular manufacturer's central processor.

[0048] According to an exemplary embodiment, any of the WINDOWS® (WINDOWS® is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation, One Microsoft Way, Redmond Wash. 98052-6399, 425.882.8080, www.Microsoft.com) operating systems may be used. Other operating systems, however, are also suitable. Such other operating systems would include the UNIX® operating system (UNIX® is a registered trademark of the Open Source Group, www.opensource.org), the UNIX-based Linux operating system, WINDOWS NT®, and Mac® OS (Mac® is a registered trademark of Apple Computer, Inc., 1 Infinite Loop, Cupertino, Calif. 95014, 408.996.1010, www.apple.com). Those of ordinary skill in the art again understand that the program, processes, methods, and systems described herein are not limited to any particular operating system.

[0049] The system memory device (shown as memory subsystem **152**, flash memory **154**, or peripheral storage device **156**) may also contain an application program. The application program cooperates with the operating system and with a video display unit (via the serial port **174** and/or the parallel port **176**) to provide a Graphical User Interface (GUI). The Graphical User Interface typically includes a combination of signals communicated along the keyboard port **170** and the mouse port **172**. The Graphical User Interface provides a convenient visual and/or audible interface with a subscriber of the computer system **150**.

[0050] **FIG. 11** is a schematic illustrating still more exemplary embodiments. **FIG. 11** illustrates that the sampling application **20** may alternatively or additionally operate within various other communications devices **36**. **FIG. 11**, for example, illustrates that the sampling application **20** may entirely or partially operate within a personal digital assistant (PDA) **200**, a Global Positioning System (GPS) device **202**, an interactive television **204**, an Internet Protocol (IP) phone **206**, a pager **208**, a cellular/satellite phone **210**, or any computer system and/or communications device utilizing a digital signal processor (DSP) **212**. The communications device **36** may also include watches, radios, vehicle electronics, clocks, printers, media devices, and other apparatuses and systems.

[0051] **FIGS. 12-14** are schematics further illustrating various other communications devices for providing sample content, according to the exemplary embodiments. **FIG. 12** is a block diagram of a Subscriber Identity Module **220**, while **FIGS. 13 and 14** illustrate, respectively, the Subscriber Identity Module **220** embodied in a plug **222** and the Subscriber Identity Module **220** embodied in a card **224**. As those of ordinary skill in the art recognize, the Subscriber Identity Module **220** may be used in conjunction with many communications devices (such as the wireless phone **50** shown in **FIG. 2** or the remote control **62** shown in **FIG. 3**). The Subscriber Identity Module **220** stores subscriber information (such as the subscriber's International Mobile Subscriber Identity, the subscriber's K_i number, and other subscriber information), perhaps the subscriber's profile (shown as reference numeral **108**), and any portion of the sampling application **20**. As those of ordinary skill in the art also recognize, the plug **222** and the card **224** each interface with the communications device according to GSM Standards 2.17 and 11.11 and ISO Standard 7816, with each incorporated herein by reference. The GSM Standard 2.17 is formally known as "European digital cellular telecommunications system (Phase 1); *Subscriber Identity Modules, Functional Characteristics* (GSM 02.17 V3.2.0 (1995 January))." The GSM Standard 11.11 is formally known as "Digital cellular telecommunications system (Phase 2+) (GSM); *Specification of the Subscriber Identity Module—Mobile Equipment* (*Subscriber Identity Module—ME*) interface (GSM 11.11 V5.3.0 (1996 July))." Both GSM standards are available from the European Telecommunication Standards Institute (650 route des Lucioles, 06921 Sophia-Antipolis Cedex, FRANCE, Tel.: +33 (0)4 92 94 42 00, Fax:

+33 (0)4 93 65 47 16, www.etsi.org). The ISO Standard 7816 is formally known as "*Information technology—Identification cards—Integrated circuit(s) cards with contacts,*" and the standard is available from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (1, rue de Varembé, Case postale 56CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, Telephone +41 22 749 01 11, Telefax +41 22 733 34 30, www.iso.org).

[0052] **FIG. 12** is a block diagram of the Subscriber Identity Module **220**, whether embodied as the plug **222** of **FIG. 13** or as the card **224** of **FIG. 14**. Here the Subscriber Identity Module **220** comprises a processor **226** (μP) communicating with memory modules **228** via a data bus **230**. The memory modules may include Read Only Memory (ROM) **232**, Random Access Memory (RAM) and or flash memory **234**, and Electrically Erasable-Programmable Read Only Memory (EEPROM) **236**. The Subscriber Identity Module **220** stores some or all of the sampling application **20** in one or more of the memory modules **228**. **FIG. 12** shows the sampling application **20** residing in the Erasable-Programmable Read Only Memory **236**, yet the sampling application **20** could alternatively or additionally reside in the Read Only Memory **232** and/or the Random Access/Flash Memory **234**. An Input/Output module **238** handles communication between the Subscriber Identity Module **220** and the media device. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, there are many suitable ways for implementing the operation and physical/memory structure of the Subscriber Identity Module. If, however, the reader desires more information on the Subscriber Identity Module, the reader is directed to the following sources: LAWRENCE HARTE et al., GSM SUPERPHONES 99-100, 113-14 (1999); SIEGMUND REDL et al., GSM AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS HANDBOOK 303-69 (1998); and JOACHIM TISAL, GSM CELLULAR RADIO TELEPHONY 99-130 (1997), with each incorporated herein by reference.

[0053] **FIG. 15** is a schematic further illustrating various communications devices for providing sample content, according to the exemplary embodiments. **FIG. 15** is a block diagram of another communications device **250** utilizing any portion of the sampling application **20**. In one embodiment, the communications device **250** comprises a transceiver unit **252**, an antenna **254**, a digital baseband chipset **256**, and a man/machine interface (MMI) **258**. The transceiver unit **252** includes transmitter circuitry **260** and receiver circuitry **262** for receiving and transmitting radio-frequency (RF) signals. The transceiver unit **252** couples to the antenna **254** for converting electrical current to and from electromagnetic waves. The digital baseband chipset **256** contains a digital signal processor (DSP) **264** and performs signal processing functions for audio (voice) signals and RF signals. As **FIG. 15** shows, the digital baseband chipset **256** may also include an on-board microprocessor **266** that interacts with the man/machine interface (MMI) **258**. The man/machine interface (MMI) **258** may comprise a display device **268**, a keypad **270**, and the Subscriber Identity Module **220**. The on-board processor **266** performs GSM protocol functions and control functions for the radio circuitry **260** and **262**, for the display device **268**, and for the keypad **270**. The on-board processor **266** may also interface with the Subscriber Identity Module **220** and with the sampling application **20** residing in the memory module **228** of the Subscriber Identity Module **220**. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that there may be many suitable architectural configurations for the elements of the communications device **250**. If the reader desires a more detailed explanation, the reader is invited to consult the following sources: LAWRENCE HARTE et al., GSM SUPERPHONES 105-120 (1999); SIEGMUND REDL et al., GSM AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS HANDBOOK 389-474 (1998); and JOACHM TISAL, GSM CELLULAR RADIO TELEPHONY 99-130 (1997), with each incorporated herein by reference.

[0054] The sampling application **20** may be utilized regardless of signaling standard. As those of ordinary skill in the art recognize, **FIGS. 12-15** illustrate a Global System for Mobile (GSM) media device. That is, the communications device utilizes the Global System for Mobile (GSM) communications signaling standard. Those of ordinary skill in the art, however, also recognize the sampling application **20** is equally applicable to any media device utilizing the Time Division Multiple Access signaling standard, the Code Division Multiple Access signaling standard, the "dual-mode" GSM-ANSI Interoperability Team (GAIT) signaling standard, or any variant of the GSM/CDMA/TDMA signaling standard.

[0055] **FIG. 16** is a block diagram further illustrating the communications device **36**, according to yet more of the exemplary embodiments. Here the communications device **36** is shown as a digital high definition television (HDTV) system **300**. Although an HDTV system is shown, the exemplary embodiments are applicable to any television design. The concepts, for example, are applicable to analog circuitry, digital circuitry, analog signals, and/or or digital signals. The television may include an encoder/decoder, such as an embedded set-top box. The term "television," however, may encompass a stand-alone set-top box that is a separate component from the television. The television may also utilize any display device technology, such as a cathode-ray, a liquid crystal, a diode, digital micromirror, light processor, or plasma. The content sharing application **22** may be stored in any memory location or device in the television **16**. **FIG. 16**, though, is only a simplified block diagram. The operating and engineering principles are already known in the art and will not be repeated here. If, however, the reader desires more information on the television, the reader is directed to the following sources: MICHEAL ROBIN & MICHEL POULIN, DIGITAL TELEVISION FUNDAMENTALS (2000); JERRY WHITAKER AND BLAIR BENSON, VIDEO AND TELEVISION ENGINEERING (2003); JERRY WHITAKER, DTV HANDBOOK (2001); JERRY WHITAKER, DTV: THE REVOLUTION IN ELECTRONIC IMAGING (1998); and EDWARD M. SCHWALB, ITV HANDBOOK: TECHNOLOGIES AND STANDARDS (2004), with each incorporated herein by reference.

[0056] **FIG. 17** is a block diagram of the remote control **62** shown in **FIG. 3**, according to even more exemplary embodiments. The remote control **22** includes the auxiliary processor **52** interfacing with the display **56** and with a keypad **330**. The processor **52** also interfaces with the auxiliary transceiver **54** to wirelessly send control signals to the media device (shown as reference numeral **24** in **FIG. 1**). The remote control **62** includes means **340** for audibly presenting the sample (shown as reference numeral **32** in **FIG. 1-3** and **9**). The means **340** for audibly presenting the sample may include a speaker, a piezoelectric element, and/or any other device that emits sounds. The remote

control **62** may also include a video encoder/decoder **350** for decoding video signals and a media player **360** for executing media files. The remote control **62** may include camera circuitry **360** for capturing digital images and video (such as still photos, movies, and video calls). A web browser **370** may be stored in memory **380**, and the web browser **370** allows navigation of local and remote content destinations. While the processor **52** is shown as a component distinct from the other components in **FIG. 17**, it should be appreciated that the processor and one or more of the components shown in **FIG. 17** may be integrated within the same component.

[**0057**] **FIG. 18** is a flowchart illustrating a method of providing sample content, according to still more exemplary embodiments. An electronic programming guide, comprising a listing of available content, is received (Block **400**). An ancillary stream of data is also received, and the ancillary stream of data comprises samples of content listed in the electronic programming guide (Block **402**). The ancillary stream of data may comprise samples of all available content listed in the electronic programming guide (Block **404**). The ancillary stream of data may comprise samples of a subset of available content listed in the electronic programming guide (Block **406**). The ancillary stream of data may comprise samples of content matching a profile of the user (Block **408**). A user input is received that selects a particular content from the electronic programming guide (Block **410**). Unselected samples of content are filtered from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content (Block **412**). The sample is processed into a video signal at a communications device (Block **414**). The video signal is displayed, thus producing the preview of the selected particular content (Block **416**).

[**0058**] The sampling application (shown as reference numeral **20** in **FIGS. 1-17**) may be physically embodied on or in a computer-readable medium. This computer-readable medium may include CD-ROM, DVD, tape, cassette, floppy disk, memory card, and large-capacity disk (such as IOMEGA®, ZIP®, JAZZ®, and other large-capacity memory products (IOMEGA®, ZIP®, and JAZZ® are registered trademarks of Iomega Corporation, 1821 W. Iomega Way, Roy, Utah 84067, 801.332.1000, www.iomega.com). This computer-readable medium, or media, could be distributed to end-subscribers, licensees, and assignees. These types of computer-readable media, and other types not mentioned here but considered within the scope of the exemplary embodiments, allow the sampling application to be easily disseminated.

[**0059**] The sampling application may be physically embodied on or in any addressable (e.g., HTTP, I.E.E.E. 802.11, Wireless Application Protocol (WAP)) wireless device capable of presenting an IP address. Examples could include a computer, a wireless personal digital assistant (PDA), an Internet Protocol mobile phone, or a wireless pager.

[**0060**] While the exemplary embodiments have been described with respect to various features, aspects, and embodiments, those skilled and unskilled in the art will recognize the exemplary embodiments are not so limited. Other variations, modifications, and alternative embodiments may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the exemplary embodiments.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for providing sample content, comprising:

at least one processor for receiving a programming guide comprising a listing of available content and for receiving an ancillary stream of data, the ancillary stream of data comprising multiple samples of content listed in the programming guide; and

a user interface for receiving a user input that selects a particular content from the programming guide and for communicating the user input to the processor, wherein the processor filters unselected samples of content from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content as a preview of the selected particular content.

2. A system according to claim 1, further comprising a display, wherein the processor processes the sample into a video signal and communicates the video signal to the display for displaying the video signal as a preview of the selected content.

3. A system according to claim 1, further comprising a transceiver for wirelessly communicating the sample to a communications device.

4. A system according to claim 3, wherein the communications device is a remote control.

5. A system according to claim 1, wherein the ancillary stream of data comprises samples of at least a portion of the available content listed in the programming guide.

6. A system according to claim 1, wherein the ancillary stream of data comprises samples of content matching a profile of the user.

7. A system according to claim 1, wherein the programming guide is an electronic programming guide.

8. A method for providing sample content, the method comprising:

receiving a programming guide comprising a listing of available content;

receiving an ancillary stream of data comprising samples of content listed in the programming guide;

receiving a user input that selects a particular content from the programming guide;

filtering unselected samples of content from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content; and

processing the sample for preview of the selected particular content.

9. A method according to claim 8, further comprising processing the sample into a video signal and displaying the video signal at a communications device as a preview of the selected particular content.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein the communications device is a remote control.

11. A method according to claim 8, wherein receiving the ancillary stream of data comprises receiving samples of at least a portion of the available content listed in the programming guide.

12. A method according to claim 8, wherein receiving the ancillary stream of data comprises receiving samples of content matching a profile of the user.

13. A method according to claim 8, wherein the programming guide is an electronic programming guide.

14. A method according to claim 8, wherein receiving the ancillary stream of data comprises receiving samples of all available content listed in the programming guide.

15. A method according to claim 8, wherein receiving the ancillary stream of data comprises receiving samples of a subset of available content listed in the programming guide.

16. A computer-readable medium on which instructions are encoded for performing the steps of:

receiving a programming guide comprising a listing of available content;

receiving an ancillary stream of data comprising samples of content listed in the programming guide;

receiving a user input that selects a particular content from the programming guide;

filtering unselected samples of content from the ancillary stream of data to produce a sample of the selected particular content; and

processing the sample for preview of the selected particular content.

17. A computer readable medium according to claim 16, wherein the sample is processed at a communications device into a video signal for display as a visual preview of the selected particular content.

18. A computer readable medium according to claim 17, wherein the communications device is a remote control.

19. A computer readable medium according to claim 16, wherein receiving the ancillary stream of data comprises receiving samples of at least a portion of the available content listed in the programming guide.

20. A computer readable medium according to claim 16, wherein receiving the ancillary stream of data comprises receiving samples of content matching a profile of the user.

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