15.4 Interpreting Relative URLs in the Destination Page

Although a servlet can forward the request to an arbitrary location on the same server, the process is quite different from that of using the `sendRedirect` method of `HttpServletResponse`. First, `sendRedirect` requires the client to reconnect to the new resource, whereas the `forward` method of `RequestDispatcher` is handled completely on the server. Second, `sendRedirect` does not automatically preserve all of the request data; `forward` does. Third, `sendRedirect` results in a different final URL, whereas with `forward`, the URL of the original servlet is maintained.

This final point means that if the destination page uses relative URLs for images or style sheets, it needs to make them relative to the servlet URL or the server root, not to the destination page's actual location. For example, consider the following style sheet entry:

```
<LINK REL=STYLESHEET
      HREF="my-styles.css"
      TYPE="text/css">
```

If the JSP page containing this entry is accessed by means of a forwarded request, `my-styles.css` will be interpreted relative to the URL of the *originating* servlet, not relative to the JSP page itself, almost certainly resulting in an error. The simplest solution to this problem is to give the full server path to the style sheet file, as follows.

```
<LINK REL=STYLESHEET
      HREF="/path/my-styles.css"
      TYPE="text/css">
```

The same approach is required for addresses used in `<IMG SRC=...>` and `<A HREF=...>`.