A **network** is a collection of computers and other devices that are connected together.

**Important Terms**

**Network Server** – the computer that “serves” or distributes resources to network users.

**Workstation** – a computer connected to a network.

**Stand-alone computer** – a computer not connected to a network.

**LAN** - Local Area Network. A LAN is a computer network that is within a limited geographical area.

**WAN** - Wide Area Network. A WAN covers a large geographical area.

**Why are Computers Networked?**

The main reason computers are networked is to **share resources**. Shared resources include **hardware, software and data**. The most commonly shared piece of hardware is the **printer**.

**Local Resources**

Local resources are the resources (hardware, software, and data) that are directly connected to or stored on the workstation. Access to these resources is available even if the network system is down.
Advantages of Networking

Recall that computers are networked to share resources. Sharing resources can result in a number of savings both in money and time.

- Shared hardware reduces the financial investment in hardware and the time required to maintain the hardware.
- Purchasing a network software license is often less expensive than purchasing individual user licenses.
- Placing software on the network reduces the amount of time necessary to upgrade the software.
- Employees may be more efficient as they can easily share data.

Accessing a Local Network

Use of resources on a network may be restricted. Passwords and user names are often used to establish rights to a network and to limit access to certain resources, especially data.