# What is a NIC?

So, what is a NIC?  Basically, it is a piece of hardware that is used for network communication. It translates messages between a network signal and a serial signal. What that means is that when you have a device such as a printer that only send a serial message to it's output port you then need to be able to connect that output to the network so the print job can be sent to a remote destination. To do that, the information in the serial message needs to be converted into a network format. How the conversion is done and the difference between the two forms of the message is not important, just that it is done by the NIC.

Where is this device located? Some devices have the NIC built right into them, so you only have to plug the network cable into the port on the device. Many printers are built with an internal NIC. Devices that do not have the internal NIC will need an external NIC which will be in it's own enclosure. There will be a network port for connection to the network and there will be a serial port that will connect to the device, such a printer with only a serial port.

NIC are normally configured with a 'keep live' ability. That will enable them to survive a brief interruption of power to the device. That is a very nice thing to have, however, when there is a problem and the NIC needs to be reset you have to know that turning the device off if the NIC is internal will not reset it. To reset the NIC when it is internal to the device it is supporting the electrical power has to be not only shut off at the device, but the power cord must be removed from the power outlet for ten seconds and then be plugged back in and the device turned back on. If the problem was with a 'hung job' on the NIC that should resolve the issue. However, if the NIC is reset and there is still a problem then you will need to contact support; either your Help Desk, LIS Admin or your software vendor.