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Network Management

The management information of the Internet Connectivity Services Network that libraries use in BC is considered confidential by the ISP's. That management information is not shared with customers even during issue resolution events. This makes identification and verification of operational Internet issues very difficult without trained technical staff or support.

You can of course manage the Local Area Network interface to the ISP 'modem' device with a management software tool of your own, if only to be able to determine if the ISP service is actually working as needed. Use of such a tool is highly recommended when your only support is a 1-800 number. Bear in mind that if you have an IP phone service, you may need to make a cell phone call as you may have no landline phone.

The network management services in a Local Area Network are based on a protocol named SNMP (Simple Network Management Protocol). In 2004, the IETF recognized SNMPV3 as defined in RFC3411-3418 as the current standard. The new standard is an attempt to improve the security of the SNMP protocols and processes through use of encrypted channels and processes.

Security issues have been extremely common for as long as SNMP has been deployed - since 1991. Version 1 is still widely deployed but is known to have serious security weaknesses. Version 3 is now the most common used in new IT products but may require complex encryption support from IT staff. Care needs to be taken to introduce these tools when using a new network system supplier.

All the different equipment manufacturers have developed their own SNMP- based software to manage the products that are sold by their dealers. These products are often provided to end clients as a value-added component of remote management services contracted for on a monthly basis. Some of these packaged services are actually easy to use, very functional, and can extend to managing all the connectivity and IT resources inside a LAN. These may represent good value to small and mid-sized organizations such as libraries. All of the products listed or linked to in this report have such a software tool, some at no charge and some as part of a paid support subscription.

There are non-proprietary network management software packages available (some free) should you want to install your own. This is not a trivial task and your local network support company likely may not have sufficient expertise to take on that challenge. A very good explanation of the SNMP protocol and a review of management software tools is found at
https://www.dnsstuff.com/snmp-monitoring-tools

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