

- » **Network drive letters don't have to be assigned the same way for every computer on the network.** For example, a network drive that's assigned drive letter *M* on your computer may be assigned drive letter *Z* on someone else's computer. In that case, your drive *M:* and the other computer's drive *Z:* refer to the same data. This arrangement can be confusing. If your network is set up this way, put pepper in your network administrator's coffee.
- » **Accessing a shared network folder through a mapped network drive is much faster than accessing the same folder by browsing the network.** Windows has to browse the entire network to list all available computers whenever you browse the network. By contrast, Windows doesn't have to browse the network to access a mapped network drive.
- » **If you select the Reconnect at Sign-in option for a mapped drive (refer to Figure 3-4), you receive a warning message if the drive isn't available when you log on.** In most cases, the problem is that your computer can't connect to the server. Double-check all your network connections and settings to make sure.

## Using a Network Printer

Using a network printer is much like using a network hard drive: You can print to a network printer from any Windows program by choosing the Print command to call up a Print dialog box from any program and choosing a network printer from the list of available printers.

Keep in mind, however, that printing on a network printer isn't exactly the same as printing on a local printer; you have to take turns. When you print on a local printer, you're the only one using it. When you print to a network printer, however, you are (in effect) standing in line behind other network users, waiting to share the printer. This line complicates the situation in several ways:

- » **If several users print to the network printer at the same time, the network has to keep the print jobs separate from one another.** If it didn't, the result would be a jumbled mess, with your 268-page report getting mixed in with the payroll checks. That would be bad. Fortunately, the network takes care of this situation by using the fancy *print spooling* feature.
- » **Network printing works on a first-come, first-served basis.** Invariably, when I get in line at the hardware store, the person in front of me is trying to buy something that doesn't have a product code on it. I end up standing there for hours waiting for someone in Plumbing to pick up the phone for a price