What to do when someone questions why a book cannot be taken out of the building.

It is unusual for a library not to allow books to be taken out of the building. A patron who expects to be able to take a book home may be surprised and angry when he discovers he can not do so. If this happens when Bobbie or Jane is here, it is easy to quickly get one of them to come to the desk and explain the policy, but what do you do when that is not the case?

First, remember to take a moment to understand how the patron feels. It would be distressing to have your research plans upset by a completely unexpected rule. Express sincere regret that the rule is causing a problem; acknowledge that it was reasonable for the patron to expect to be able to take the book home. It sometimes helps to tell the person that law students and law faculty can not take books out of the building either.

Next, try to offer a solution that might help. We can put the book on the hold-shelf so the person can easily get it when he next comes to the library. The person may apply for a carrel in which he can keep that book, as well as any other law library books he needs. Perhaps he can photocopy a portion of the book that will allow him to continue working on it at home at night.

If the patron wants to see the policy, or wants further explanation, show him the "Circulation Policy" that is printed on the other side of the carrel application form. In the second paragraph that policy states very briefly why we do not allow books to be checked out of the Legal Research/Hutchins Hall complex. We want to enable all users to obtain the books they need as quickly as possible. To achieve that goal we only allow books to be checked out to offices and carrels in the building, and makes daily runs, Monday through Friday, to retrieve books from offices and carrels when one is needed. We issue passes and stay open long hours so that people will be able to come in to use the material any time between 8 a.m. and midnight on most days of the year. We keep carrels available so that anyone can check library books to a carrel to have them readily available.

If that explanation does not suffice -- and it often will not -- again tell him (sincerely) that you are sorry the policy doesn't meet his research needs and offer to write an incident report, or allow him to write one, that explains the problem and Jane or I will contact him on the next day (or Monday, if this happens during the weekend). Or, give him Bobbie's telephone number (734-763-3767; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. M-F) if he prefers to contact us. Again offer to put the book on the hold-shelf for him, so it can be readily found when he next needs it and encourage him to fill out a carrel application if he needs it for a longer time. Note that we are open from 8 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week, with few exceptions when school is in session and that the book can remain in the carrel for him to use, as long as no one else needs it.