

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LAW FIRM LIBRARY WORLD

Guest Editorial

Taking on the role of guest editor for a theme in this edition of *Legal Information Management* has enabled me to take a step back and look at my career from a different perspective. Subsequently, this has led me to ask myself why working as an information professional in a law firm has turned out to be such a satisfying career choice.

Is it the intellectual challenge of complex legal research? Or perhaps it's about having a direct impact on the advice given to a paying client in a real life situation – be that a multi-million pound corporate transaction; a high profile court case involving household names; or via a small but meaningful pro bono case? Or, is it being involved with cutting edge technologies, while collaborating with teams across the organisation to deliver an exciting new solution to a group of lawyers? I guess the simple answer is that it's a mix of all these. And more.

Working in a law firm means juggling a number of different projects, research tasks and day-to-day administration on any given day, and this sector has exposed me to numerous and diverse opportunities to stretch my skillset and learn about new initiatives. It has also given me the freedom to exercise my curiosity to reach those *eureka* moments we all strive for.

This issue of *Legal Information Management* will hopefully give you an insight into this stimulating world, by taking an in-depth look at some of the unique aspects of working in a law firm environment.

One key and recurring theme for law firm information professionals is knowledge management, which has been an increasing part of our lives over the last two decades. I remember, when I was at library school in

1996, there was a new module introduced to the syllabus called *knowledge management*, and we were assured it was going to be an important part of our future – our lecturer was not wrong there!

In their article, Aileen Johnson and Simon Heatley walk us through what knowledge means in a law firm, and why it is vital to create a knowledge strategy plan relevant to the business in order to deliver tangible solutions for the firm. Elsewhere, Richard Tomlinson discusses some current themes in the world of knowledge management with a focus on technology tools, while Eleanor White talks us through how to assess whether a technology system is fit for purpose and therefore a smart investment decision. These articles all resonate particularly well in recent times, when many firms have turned to technology to support teams working from home.

My own article on selecting and delivering an enquiries tracking system aims at highlighting how important data is when justifying our services and managing workload with fewer resources and a decreasing budget. Meanwhile, Michael Maher's change management piece looks at how law firm libraries are coping in the current environment of COVID-19, and provides some practical advice for improving our virtual services.

Regardless of whether your workplace is a law firm, a barristers' chamber, a university, or whatever else, we all face challenging times ahead, and hopefully some of the hard-won tips those working on the legal front provide in this issue will be helpful to those working in other sectors too.

Jas Breslin