

Biography

Joan Batchen is the Firmwide Library Services Manager at Kirkland & Ellis LLP, an international law firm of 1,100 attorneys with offices in Chicago, London, Los Angeles, Munich, New York, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. She joined K&E in 1992 as a research specialist, responsible for providing a wide variety of research and reference services to the Firm's attorneys and legal staff. In 1998, she became the Firmwide Library Services Manager, responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Chicago library, as well as firm-wide co-ordination of all libraries.

Prior to joining Kirkland, Joan worked for 10 years in commercial real estate in various capacities. She then came to her senses and became a librarian. Joan holds a B.A. in English and History as well as an M.B.A., all from Loyola University of Chicago. She is a member of the American Association of Law Libraries and the Special Libraries Association.

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Going Global, Acting Local: Multi-Site Management in US Law Firms

Over-paid, over-worked, and over here? From a trickle of firms arriving in the UK 50 years or so ago, US law firms are now a noisy presence in the London and wider European legal marketplace. They are expected by some estimates to commandeer 10% of the UK legal market within the next couple of years. Linda Maynard examines what it is like working in such a firm, in particular, looking at multi-site law firm management from the fringes rather than the centre.

Introduction

The old stereotype of a couple of American lawyers sent to a distant outpost to nurse their UK clients has long disappeared as US firms have developed wide-based London and European practices. This growth has created opportunities for many legal information professionals. Although I am grateful to a number of colleagues who have shared their experiences of working for US law firms, this article is predominantly based on my own experiences at Howrey LLP.



Linda Maynard

offices across the US and Europe and its unofficial head office is in Washington DC. Many people are surprised that most of our lawyers in London practice UK and European law. Although this is partly due to the nature of our practice areas, it is common for US firms based in London to have substantive English and European practices alongside their US capabilities.

Management structure

Howrey espouses the concept of "One Howrey" and support departments tend to be organised either on regional or practice-based lines in an attempt to avoid the parent/satellite office tensions that can develop in

The Mother Ship

Howrey LLP has over 560 lawyers and staff. Specialising in competition, intellectual property and litigation, it has 14

multi-site practices. Our department is called Knowledge Services. It is organised regionally with managers in DC, California, Texas, Brussels and London who report into our head of department (based in our DC office) and their local office manager. Both the London and Brussels office also have library partners who help advise on the strategic direction of the department. Generally, there is a high level of autonomy at a local level. Budgets are set centrally and firm-wide electronic services are negotiated from our DC office, but managers are able to develop services tailored to local needs and requirements. These looser reporting structures appear fairly common among US firms. In part, it is a pragmatic solution to satisfy diverse information needs across firms, but it also reflects the fact that management structures have sometimes lagged behind the international spread of firms.

Subsidiarity's best

Adapting a basic concept of federalism, many information departments in US law firms demonstrate the benefits of subsidiarity whereby functions are delegated to the smallest competent authority and the centre should look after tasks that cannot be performed effectively at local level. Generally, staff recruitment, training, enquiry and current awareness services are run locally. Most purchasing is done locally, although firms will use their central purchasing power. Where electronic services are negotiated centrally, it is vital for local information managers to feed into the process to ensure that important services are not omitted from the contract. Even where budgets are set centrally, as at Howrey, local managers prepare budget information to feed into this process. At Howrey, as library budgets are compared across all the offices, a key part of the local information manager's role is to explain and justify the need for particular information sources. This is essential as we want to ensure that local resources are commensurate with the size and reputation of Howrey firm-wide so that clients receive the same level of service no matter where their lawyer is based.

Communications

Local autonomy works well at Howrey as reflected in our high local standing. Knowledge Services is keen to build on this to develop our status and reach as a firm-wide department and to be seen as an essential contributor to firm-wide projects and initiatives. Recently we have been closely involved in a firm-wide committee developing the document profiles for the firm's new document management system. However, we have found communications can be a barrier to working effectively at a firm-wide level.

Our department is fortunate in that Howrey pays for all the managers to meet annually in DC to discuss our

strategy and plans for the forthcoming year and beyond. Other US firms also meet annually, some base this around the AALL conference. Certainly all our managers find our "summit" highly beneficial, although we have found it hard to keep in touch between these meetings, which has led to some initiatives slipping off the radar. We know we need to formalise inter-departmental communications but have not yet come up with the ideal solution. One of the reasons for this is the difficulty of finding a convenient meeting time for conference calls when we are spread across so many time zones e.g. 5pm in Brussels = 8am in California. We tried circulating a departmental bulletin but did not have the resources to sustain this initiative and have found ad hoc meetings based regionally are insufficient for our needs.

A wider problem is communicating with other support departments. It can be hard to track down who is responsible for particular projects in different offices; it can be hard finding out the progress of projects; and it can be especially hard to demonstrate to people you don't know that someone they don't know in a different office and department may be able to contribute to their project. Knowledge Services wants to help guide people through this maze and one solution is to utilise our networking skills by participating in projects and events as much as possible. We also engage the help of local advocates, such as our office managers and library partners, to promote our skills and services. In Europe, we are fortunate in that we are invited to the annual summer picnic, which is a great chance to meet lawyers working in the other European offices. As we circulate our current awareness bulletins across offices and often field research requests from them, this is a chance to finally put names to faces. On an individual level, I have found it is worth making the effort to introduce yourself to lawyers and support staff from our other offices when they come over to London. Following-up individually with people on conference calls can also help separate the individuals from the melee of voices. Especially when the chances of meeting them face to face is remote.

Knowledge management

It is true to say that knowledge management is more developed in UK firms. As mentioned above, many US firms in London have a large proportion of lawyers accustomed to working in a KM environment supported with intranets, know-how databases and professional support lawyers. Firms seem to have adopted one of four main approaches to KM. Firstly, not to do anything. Secondly, to develop technology based solutions such as portals/intranets, collaboration tools, West KM or TotalSearch (proprietary search engines which search across internal work documents and external search engines). Thirdly, to develop local KM infrastructures and

resources to meet the needs of individual offices (sometimes these act as a springboard to firm-wide initiatives – an interesting illustration of influencing strategy from the outside in) and finally, to develop firm-wide KM infrastructures and resources. As UK information professionals are often regarded as having more experience in this area, KM provides great opportunities to develop local and firm-wide services. Up to now at Howrey we have developed local KM tools but our department's goal is to execute a firm-wide KM strategy.

Summary

All law firms are different. So many different factors impact on their development and structure and this is

reflected in the management of individual support departments. Fortunately pragmatism generally prevails over rigid management structures. Giving local offices autonomy over their affairs ensures that lawyers can focus on developing within their local market whilst optimising the benefits of the firm's global presence. Likewise, information departments can join together on firm-wide initiatives such as developing intranets and KM strategies whilst also developing local information initiatives. Sadly, for those yearning for John Grisham glamour, US law firms do not differ much from their UK counterparts of comparative size. However, working at the satellite fringes of a multi-site practice proffers information professionals excellent opportunities to develop and expand knowledge and information services within their firms.

Biography

Linda Maynard is currently information officer at Howrey LLP. She previously worked at McDermott Will & Emery LLP another US law firm in London. Linda was Secretary of BIALL in 2005–06 and has had a long and varied career in law librarianship.

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The American Collection at Middle Temple Library

Vanessa Hayward, Librarian and Keeper of the Records at Middle Temple, charts the history of one of the most important collections of American law in this country.

Introduction

There has been a library at Middle Temple since before 1540, evidence coming from a manuscript in the Archive for that date which states, “*They now have no library so that they cannot attaine to the knowledge of divers learnings, but to their great chardges by the buying of such bookes as they lust to study. They had a simple library in which were not many bookes besides the law and that library by meanes that is stood always open, and that the learners had not each a key unto it, it was at last robbed of all the bookes in it.*”

The Library in Tudor and Stuart times

Not much more is known about the library in Tudor times, and it was not until 1641 when Robert Ashley, with

his bequest of books and funding, that the library was rededicated and the first librarian was employed. There



Fig. 1: America – Molyneux Globe (1602)