

CAREER INSIGHTS



Nick Fox Research & Information Advisor

1. What are your main responsibilities?

Although I work for an international law firm, I am not a lawyer. My job title is Research & Information Advisor and my responsibility is to provide information support for the lawyers and other professionals in Business Services. I am part of a team of five people who staff the Research & Enquiry desk, so that we can answer users' requests as quickly as possible. When lawyers are working on a transaction, they often need information urgently and it is our job to supply this.

Most of our enquiries can be divided into legal or business. Users might want us to find them a law report or tell them if a section of an Act is still in force; or they might want to know who the directors of a company are or what its share price is. These questions are straightforward, but others are more complicated, such as, 'Could I have a list of UK telecoms companies which have subsidiaries in India?' Often they ask us to run a press search on a company, because a newspaper article may include information about a company which would not appear in its annual report. The enquiry desk is based in the Research Centre, which houses a collection of legal textbooks. The Research Centre is also home to the Firm's innovation space, a hub for collaborative working.

Much of the information is available at users' desktops, so an important part of our job is preparing and delivering training courses to enable them to use the online sources effectively. A new group of trainee solicitors joins the firm every six months and we devote a lot of time to training them in research skills. As a Slaughter and May trainee you might be surprised how often you will work with our team!

2. What key skills are needed for your role?

Information skills are essential in my role. I must be able to find an answer to a lawyer's query quickly. But people skills are almost equally important. Often when users request information, for example, I have to spend time asking questions to establish their precise needs. This can be difficult when users are time-pressured because they are in the middle of an important transaction, but it is essential that they receive the correct information.

When applying for a post at Slaughter and May, I think you should focus on your key skills. Nobody is fully qualified for any role that they apply for, but it's about thinking about what skills you have that mean you can learn how to do the job well.

3. What is it like working at Slaughter and May?

The firm makes huge efforts to be welcoming to everyone and has embraced legal tech initiatives such as document automation and AI software, which makes it an inclusive, interesting and dynamic place to work.

For me, the most enjoyable aspect of Slaughter and May is working with my colleagues. In our small team of five, we all know that we can rely on each other for support.

As in any firm, IT can pose some problems. Fortunately, the IT help-desk is only a phone call away. The staff are very helpful and provide excellent back-up.

The firm promotes a lot of volunteering opportunities. I have been taking part in the Reading Partners scheme, which has involved spending half an hour a week at a local primary school where I have helped a boy with his reading.

4. What was your route to where you are today?

I have worked as a librarian throughout my career, but not always in the legal sector. My first job after leaving school was as a library assistant for the Norfolk public library service.

I then took a degree in Librarianship at Liverpool Polytechnic (now Liverpool John Moores University). Later I worked for ten years for the Inner London Education Authority, where I was providing a library service for teachers. When this authority was abolished, I had to find a new job and that was the beginning of a new career in legal libraries. After a temporary post at the Law Society Library, I moved to Linklaters, one of the largest of the international law firms. I then applied successfully for a similar post at Slaughter and May.

5. What is your advice to your younger self?

When I look back on my younger self, as he sometimes struggled early in his career, I want to shout at him, 'Ask someone to help you!' I was often too shy to seek help, but I know now that most people are very happy to give advice – it's much better than having to correct someone's mistakes later.

I enjoy most of my work, particularly dealing with enquiries, as I never know what I shall be asked next. However, there are inevitably more routine tasks, which it is easy to put off doing. When this happens, I try to set myself little goals such as, 'I'll work for 20 minutes and then make a cup of tea.'