

blog post | 08 March 2018

International Women's Day: Women in law

For International Women's Day 2018, we consider the increasing and vital role of women in the legal profession.

As part of International Women's Day 2018, a few of us from the Totum team were delighted to attend an event at Withers to find out more about The First 100 Years, a ground-breaking digital history project, recording the stories of women in law.

The First 100 Years

The First 100 Years project charts the journey of women in law since 1919, marking the year in which the law changed, paving the way to allow women to qualify as lawyers for the first time. Withers' own story is woven into the project as the firm's Diana Parker was the first woman to be appointed Senior Partner of a City firm, while Elaine Aarons was one of the first partners to establish flexible working in 1989.

With this strong connection to the development of women in law, Withers welcomed Dana Denis-Smith to talk about The First 100 Years, a project that brings together and films stories of women in law, the digital archive of which will be donated to the British Museum in 2019.

We very much enjoyed hearing more about this project and the stories of women whose positive impact on our working world is all too easily forgotten. This is especially the case as at Totum, we want to be at the forefront of supporting today's women in law ? and helping develop what will be the stories of the future.

Law firms still face a challenge to retain women at partnership level. But our focus on business services in law has shown how much can change and quickly, as we have seen a huge influx of women working at all levels of seniority across business services functions in the legal sector. We have been compiling our diversity statistics for candidates with Totum, and it shows an equal number of men and women signing up with us ([see our recently published diversity report](#) [1]), which also reflects our findings in terms of the applications we receive and the placements we make. Every day we see brilliant women making a real impact on the legal sector.

Shaping the future

Yes, there is a long way to go yet. Women in law ? and across sectors - are still underrepresented at leadership levels. Flexible, part-time and remote working are still works in progress in many businesses ? but will be essential to retaining female talent (and increasingly male talent too). Culturally too, the past year has raised many questions over gender equality ? vis-a-vis sexual harassment, gender pay gaps, and beyond. These issues will not be resolved quickly but how we deal with them as a society will have ramifications

long into the future.

This was a fantastic opportunity to reflect on women in law in the past 100 years, and to consider where the next stories will take us.

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