

Bickerdike Allen Partners

When you're acting as an expert witness in a case concerning a decades-old building, you need to know what the standards were at the time it was built. So when Bickerdike Allen Partners needed an answer, they turned to the BSI Knowledge Centre.

"What's so marvellous is that you can ring up with what you think is an impossible question and soon after an intelligent and wide-ranging answer will come winging back."

Beverley Green, Librarian Bickerdike Allen Partners

Customer needs

- Help searching for historical information
- Access to withdrawn standards

Customer benefits

- Rapid response
- Efficient service
- Skilled researchers to help find obscure facts
- Vast data resources

Expert witnesses

Bickerdike Allen Partners is a unique architectural consultancy with an intriguing range of specialist areas.

As well as designing buildings from feasibility through to completion, they also advise on acoustic design, construction technologies and energy conservation in homes. As wide-ranging experts, an important part of their work is to provide expert witness services.

Digging into the past

When disputes over buildings and construction take place, they're often to do with work that was carried out years in the past, sometimes decades. Expert witnesses may need to assess whether work was done to a reasonable standard or not – but that means understanding what the norms and standards of the time were. You can't necessarily judge work done decades ago by whether it meets today's building standards.

When you're looking a long way back into the past, finding this historical information isn't always easy. It becomes even harder when you need to know about a very particular detail, often a technical one.

How to find a critical technical detail

At Bickerdike Allen Partners, the person responsible for unearthing these hidden historical snippets of technical data is Beverley Green. She's a skilled researcher herself but often calls on the help of the BSI Knowledge Centre, as it has access to databases that Beverley simply doesn't.

"They can come up almost instantly with much more detail than I can," she says. "I'll often ring them to ask if they can help, then email with the details. They respond very quickly, usually within a day."

She describes an example of a technical detail that could be critical in a dispute over a building's construction.

"Say I'm looking for a British Standard on galvanizing that was current in the 1990s, and I can't find one," she says. "I'll get in touch with the Knowledge Centre and ask them if there is such a thing. They would be able to tell me what the current standard is – but they also have access to information on withdrawn standards to find the standard from the 1990s."

Within a few hours Beverley will have been able to track down the technical detail she needs.

Rich seams of knowledge

It's not just that the Knowledge Centre staff have databases that others don't; they're also skilled researchers. "Sometimes they'll suggest a new set of keywords that I wouldn't have thought of," says Beverley.

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Bickerdike Allen Partners have been drawing on the BSI Knowledge Centre for decades, and that's not changing any time soon.

"They have rich seams of knowledge that you can dig into – they're a real fount of knowledge."

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The Knowledge Centre's services are exclusively for BSI Subscribing Members. It's free and Members can use our skilled researchers whenever they need to, 09.00-17.00, Monday to Friday.

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