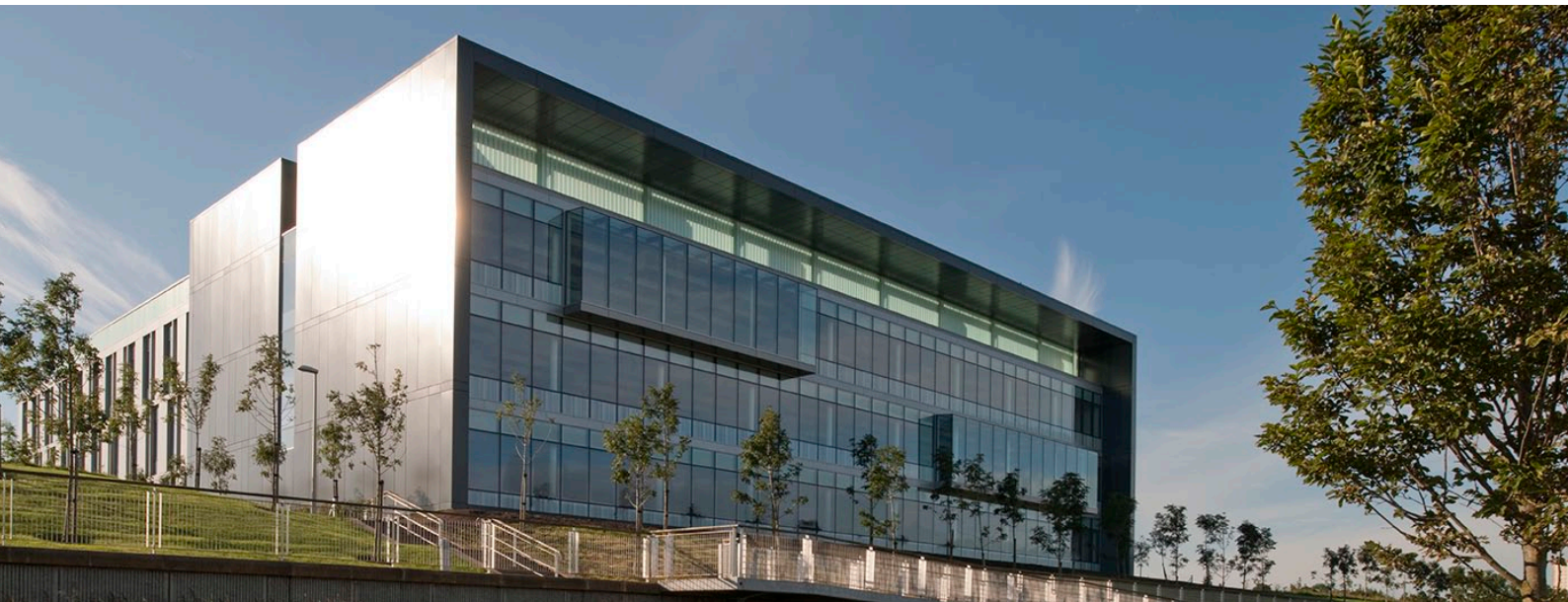# Case Study

MICHAEL **LAIRD** ARCHITECTS

Background

Michael Laird Architects (MLA) is a Scotland-based practice with offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Established in 1954, the business has won a number of awards for its projects, which span multiple sectors including workplace, residential, mixed use and conservation.

Problem

Traditionally the practice used a series of internally developed applications to manage documents and information, based on FileMaker. The system had a wide reach within the business but was rapidly becoming obsolete. Time spent debugging the system could have been put to better use elsewhere and issues with data duplication and user error were adding to the frustration. A change in personnel triggered the search for a new system to gain control and bring the business up-to-date.

Solution

MLA set out to find a system which would provide one central point of access for all business documents. The system would need to meet three key requirements: good functionality, easy access to critical data and tight security. An extensive search narrowed the options down to two vendors and Union Square for AEC Professionals came out the preferred choice. This system provides a secure, central portal for all practice information, allowing employees easy access to all relevant data, wherever they are located. From MLA's point of view, Union Square offered the most comprehensive all-encompassing package, specific to the construction industry and based upon the latest technology. The system also had the flexibility to incorporate MLA's unique project ID codes which could be linked to the relevant documents, allowing this integral internal process to remain in place.

Company
Michael Laird Architects

Business
Architect

Number of staff
33

Solution
Union Square for AEC Professionals

"Time spent debugging the old system could have been put to better use elsewhere and issues with data duplication and user error were adding to the frustration."
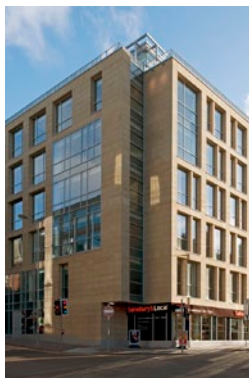
UNION SQUARE
FOR AEC PROFESSIONALS

Implementation

MLA opted for a phased implementation approach with 15 of the latest projects set up in the Union Square system, gradually introducing employees to the new way of working. Two directors were trained as administrators and eight other employees were trained as 'Champion' users, ready to train up the rest of the organisation. These users were also able to provide hands-on support to colleagues when required.

Benefits

MLA has seen a number of practice-wide improvements since implementing Union Square, including:

- **Centralised email management** – capturing and storing all incoming and outgoing emails, ensuring everyone has access to the right information and Outlook mailbox sizes are reduced.

- **Standardisation of documents** – practice-specific templates, creating consistency between all outgoing documentation and maintaining corporate image.

- **Securely held data** – controlling access to information on a user-by-user basis, safeguarding sensitive data while promoting knowledge sharing across the business.

- **Improved drawing management** – automating the issuing and revision of drawings, saving time and ensuring the latest version is always in use.

A Q&A with
Nick Gunn,
Associate

What was the main reason for choosing Union Square over other products?

It was the most comprehensive package available and ticked more boxes than the other systems on offer. As it's based on standard industry technology it was much more flexible than our legacy system.

How have things moved on since the initial implementation?

The standard Union Square product already closely matched our needs so there was little change required. There's been some customisation to modules so they are fully in-line with our specific processes and we now manage the issue of drawings through the system too.

What challenges did you face along the way?

We had an advantage as our users were in the mindset of using the old system so we had less of a challenge moving over to Union Square. The main challenge was cleaning all of our data before it was uploaded into the new system.

Has Union Square helped growth or added value?

The ease of being able to create, manage and store documentation is a great asset. It's hugely improved the organisation of information and we've now removed almost all our paper-based documents.

"Union Square offered the most comprehensive all-in-one package, specific to the construction industry and based upon the latest technology."

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