

Innovations Deliver Estate Strategy



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- Neil Higginson, University of Kent Physical Resources Administrator

The University of Kent is using leading estates and facilities management technology to assist with the planning and implementation of its Estate Strategy, as well as the management of space, property and building maintenance, at its 300 acre site on the outskirts of Canterbury.

Granted its Royal Charter in 1965, the University of Kent has over 12,000 students and three faculties comprising 18 departments. The main campus has a mix of modern and older buildings, with parts of the oldest dating back to the 15th Century. The estate is served by a 154-strong estates team.

Responsible for the collection, processing and dissemination of all estates management information is Neil Higginson, the University’s Physical Resources Administrator. Based in the Estates Department, and with a background in general administration and estates management, Neil’s role also includes space planning, management of the Estates Department’s Central Services section and responsibility for the department’s IT systems and strategy.

England (HEFCE) in 1995 to bring all aspects of estates planning together,” says Neil.

It was the requirements of the HEFCE coupled with a lack of coherence in estates-related management information that led the Estates Department to review their estates and facilities management software requirements in late 1995.



“We had an aging system that we needed to replace with one that would enable us to access our estates management information more easily,” says Neil. “Also, much of our information was dispersed. For example, some of our spatial data was held on hard copy drawings, some in AutoCAD and some in a standalone database with no links between them.

“We currently use the Space Management, Building Operations and Property & Lease Management modules as well as mass’ Helpdesk via our Intranet” says Neil Higginson.



“One of our key activities at the moment is the planning and implementation of our Estate Strategy. Estate Strategies were first required by the Higher Education Funding Council for

“We began by evaluating a number of different systems and then narrowed it down to two, finally choosing ARCHIBUS from mass. This was the clear winner for a number of reasons. Its wide range of integrated modules meant that we could contain all our estates management information within a single

system, using a common database.

"The system's flexibility meant that we could choose which application modules we wanted now and add others later as required. The direct link between the AutoCAD drawings and the database was also essential to us in ensuring the accuracy of our spatial information."

The ARCHIBUS system at the University of Kent comprises a 16 user licence and runs on a dedicated NT4 server which is managed by the University's Computing Service department.

Neil continues: "We currently use the Space Management, Building Operations and Property & Lease Management modules as well as *mass*' Helpdesk via our Intranet. There are 53 named individuals who have web access to the system and we have a supervisor and three part-time operators on our Helpdesk which handles up to 120 requests per day."

The inherent flexibility of the software meant that the web interface could readily be customised to operate in the way the University wanted.



"It works flawlessly," says Neil. "Our speed of response has improved significantly because of the system's web capability. Users can quickly log defects and generate work requests which are charged back automatically to the relevant cost code. People get feedback on the status of their work straight away by simply querying the system on-line and this helps reduce the load on the telephones.

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In addition to reactive and planned preventative maintenance, Neil also uses the system to carry out academic space planning and provide data for space recharging.

"This is where the link between the drawings and data is really beneficial," he says. "Planning options can be represented visually so it is much more intuitive. Also, as areas are calculated automatically from the CAD drawings we can be certain of the accuracy of the data that we are supplying."

mass' Financial Control module is also used to enable accurate job costing, stock control and purchase order generation.

For the future, Neil's responsibilities will extend to the management of leased space both to people on campus and to external organisations so the Property & Lease Management module will be very useful here. He is also currently considering using the system for Portable Appliance Testing.

For further information relating to *mass*' ARCHIBUS solution, please contact our team on 0118 977 8560 or email info@mass-software.com.