

# ONE SYSTEM TO RULE THEM ALL

Customer Success | Simple, Visual Search at a Global Scale



A global architecture studio with over 850 employees dispersed throughout 17 studios and 6 regions. Its portfolio is worldwide in scope, diverse in scale and discipline, and encompasses some of the highest profile projects currently underway in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Middle East. The global studio imbues its work with a rigorous vocabulary referencing urban and regional context, ecological and social sustainability, and built environment. Through architecture, interior design, and urban design/planning, they create places that enrich lives and endure for decades.

## GLOBAL MEANS GLOBAL

WOODS BAGOT is a global architectural practice founded in 1869 by Australian architects Edward John Woods and Walter Bagot. Throughout the 20th century, it expanded and flourished in regions across the globe. Today, it is established worldwide, with studios in Australia, New Zealand, China, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. They specialize in the design and planning of buildings spanning a wide spectrum of sectors and disciplines, with a keen regard for the needs, desires, interests, and inspirations of the local community.

WOODS BAGOT (W-B) operates as a single global studio, sharing work across its studio locations worldwide. W-B has no 'head office,' therefore functions including IT, HR, and Design Technology are composed of some team members who focus at a studio level, and others that preside over all 17 studios. Although the company operates across multiple regions — and must deal with specific languages, requirements/standards, measurement systems (imperial/metric), and content — the global team tries to ensure consistency of platforms and processes across all locations. More specifically, any studio or person should be able to quickly access, retrieve, and deploy assets in any project worldwide.



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## CONTENT MUST DELIVER

For W-B, content delivery is crucial. As teams in different locations are collaborating constantly, they need to have access to the same resources. Twenty years ago, content was stored on network shares across the firm. Although reliable, these locations were difficult to search, there was no version control, and it was hard to see what content was being used.

Thus, the search for a content management solution began, and resulted in the adoption of an emerging platform early in the Revit era. Over time, it became apparent that the overall user experience — and future development roadmap — did not align with where the company was headed, so they started looking at other options.



## SEARCH MADE SIMPLE AND FLEXIBLE

As they began evaluating new platforms, AVAIL emerged as the clear leader. Because of the number of studios and locations, and in the interest of saving time, it was important for W-B to have a simple way to search and access content. With the teams always under pressure to deliver on their projects, there is simply never enough time to be going into multiple folder structures to find the right content. AVAIL makes **searching and accessing** content seamless by providing users with the ability to easily identify the files they need through the visual presentation of thumbnails. And by adding tags to content, assets can be filtered down with just a few clicks. AVAIL's simple and flexible search and keyword mechanism fits how people find and sample the content, lowering geographic barriers by sharing and accessing good content on a global scale.

“**AVAIL's willingness to dive into a cloud-hosted context fulfilled the requirements that we had, and also allowed better support for multiple platforms. And the search and UI components were better than what we had.**” — Fergus Hohnen, Global Manager, Design Technology

## UI DESIGN PROVIDES VISUAL ACUITY

The W-B team values good visuals. AVAIL is intuitive, easy-to-use, and visually clean, providing users with a clear, visual representation of what they're looking for. The ability to dynamically scale thumbnails is a big plus for W-B. This feature meets the needs of different types of users and display monitor sizes. Essentially, AVAIL easily fits with how different people work.

AVAIL's user-friendly platform makes it easy to browse vast quantities of content by seeing it visually in thumbnails, rather than just viewing a list of files. And for a global firm laser-focused on project delivery, the ease of AVAIL's image management makes their work that much more efficient and less time-consuming.

## SUPPORTING TWO PRIMARY DESIGN PLATFORMS

Although historically Revit has been a key design technology, W-B uses both Revit and Rhino (equally) as their two primary platforms. To easily and efficiently support these two platforms, it is important to have a file-agnostic Content Management System (CMS) that allows the user to make any changes or edits to files, regardless of which design software is being used. AVAIL is completely file type agnostic, and it's a platform that grows with a firm, while allowing content to stay in its original location. Design projects — by their very nature — are usually complicated to begin with, but a file-agnostic CMS minimizes further complications, reduces errors, and saves time.



## USER EXPERIENCE DRIVES ADOPTION

This is what Fergus Hohnen, Global Manager – Design Technology at W-B, understood when they rolled out the AVAIL platform. By drawing people’s attention to some of the aforementioned intuitive features of AVAIL, the global studio will eventually become familiar with and comfortable using it. He pointed out that for this to happen, they need to raise the visibility of it on a regular basis via training sessions (i.e. Intro to AVAIL, Refresher on AVAIL, AVAIL Tips and Tricks, etc.). Fergus acknowledged that they still have work to do in terms of determining who is using it and who has downloaded the platform, and if they have, which content are they actually using — that from AVAIL or elsewhere? “And then the question becomes,” said Fergus, “how do we identify the things that are coming from elsewhere and try and merge them into the library, so we avoid someone recreating them again?”

“The nice thing about AVAIL’s user interface is that we essentially have one channel to put all our content into. And then, using AVAIL’s keywords or search mechanism, our guys can go through it and – for example – if they want a door, from there they can pick the actual unit. It’s a visual. You can see it. And our guys are visual people.”

— Marina Radosevic, Global Specialist, Design Technology

Adoption is a process, but by regularly raising awareness and following through with people, adoption has been rapid. As for the actual deployment of the platform, the studio didn’t have any issues because of AVAIL’s attention to large-scale deployment and user authentication strategies. Within 30 days of onboarding the management team we were able to support normal business workflows for the entire firm.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

W-B has a long history operating as a global studio, with global projects. Being able to operate without geographic boundaries is key to what they do, and this is even more important with many staff and project partners operating from home and other locations. As the business evolves, new challenges will emerge, and they will be collaborating more with external parties. Studio team structures will continue to be more fluid and flexible. As such, managing interoperability with multiple platforms and mixed media will be key. The challenge of finding and retrieving the content they need to complete their work from hundreds (and perhaps even thousands) of sources will be daunting. The AVAIL platform is designed to address exactly this, by bringing these sources directly to them. By adopting AVAIL, W-B is taking steps to face these challenges head on and, in doing so, they are transforming into a global studio that is future-proof.