

Case study: university takes steps to improve evacuations

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The University of Strathclyde's Information Services Directorate (ISD) has taken steps to try to improve the safety and efficiency of emergency evacuations from one of its busiest buildings.

The University's Andersonian Library sits within the Curran Building, a six-storey building with an unconventional layout, which also accommodates the Directorate's administrative and support staff as well as Scotland's National Centre for Prosthetics and Orthotics.

Open year-round – and 24/7 during the busiest times of the academic year – the five-storey Library receives around half a million visits from students and staff each semester. There is a busy hot drinks and snacks kiosk in the foyer, and a larger café with seating to the right of the main entrance. The Library has around 2,000 study spaces comprising computer labs, open study areas and smaller rooms for group and individual study. Printing services, a shop, library and IT helpdesks and further social seating areas mean the building attracts a large number of users – an average of almost 3400 per day in Semester 1 of 2014/15 – all with differing reasons for visiting.

Keen to support quicker, safer evacuation of students, visitors and staff from the Curran Building and the Library in particular, ISD's Communications Co-ordinator and Directorate Administrator worked to develop a new campaign. Entitled Know Two Routes, the sustainable initiative seeks to educate staff, students and visitors and encourage them to take action and improve their own awareness of safety procedures.

Taking inspiration from airlines' safety cards and demonstrations, Know Two Routes highlights graphically the available emergency exit routes out of the Curran Building, encouraging users to leave by their nearest exit in an emergency rather than always using the main staircase. The 'cards', accompanying webpage and digital signage ask visitors to leave hot drinks behind; to listen to instructions from staff; and refrain from using their mobile phones until safely out of the building.

ISD staff received Know Two Routes information by email. Eye-catching campaign posters are on display in meeting rooms throughout the building. Lively and humorous graphics posted to Facebook and Twitter (see below) direct students and others in the University community to the Know Two Routes webpage, while posters and digital signage displayed within the Library reinforce the message to visitors as they move around the building.

Early indications suggest the campaign is having an effect. Since the implementation of the Know Two Routes initiative earlier this year, evacuation times for the Curran Building have been reduced significantly and feedback received from the University Fire Safety Adviser has been extremely positive and encouraging, with evacuations cited as being "near spot on, with good staff engagement".

Smart Students Know Two Routes! To find out more about the campaign, visit www.strath.ac.uk/library/knowtworoutes or contact Alison MacLean a.d.maclean@strath.ac.uk or Emily Lawty emily.lawty@strath.ac.uk

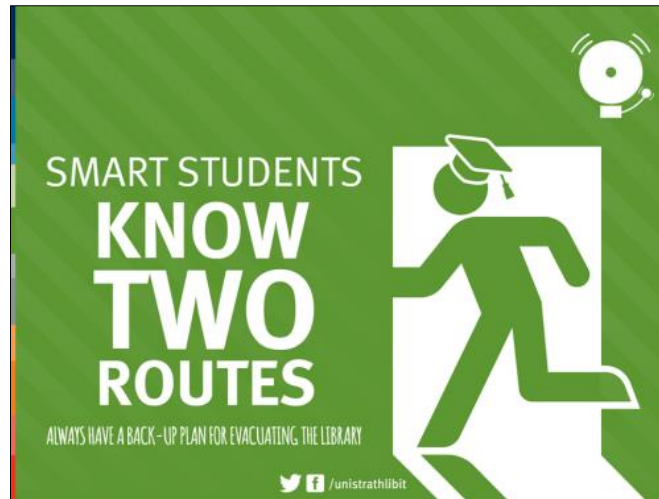


Figure 1: Example graphic used on social media and digital signage.