

The logo consists of two stylized, overlapping circular shapes made of concentric arcs, resembling signal waves or a network, in shades of yellow and orange.

# Communication Support World Network *Newsletter*

April 2018

## Introduction

The main goals of CSWN newsletters are to share what is happening in AAC around all continents and to promote networking. CSWN includes articles, resources, and additional information. The articles are about conferences and your personal experiences, with insights and information that can assist others on similar paths. Additional information includes future AAC conferences and events happening in your area. Resources are usually websites that you have come across and found very useful for your day-to-day activities in AAC. We are open to hearing your news! CSWN depends on you to read and submit, so how about we make CSWN “our” newsletter!

By Nadia Browning and Dorothy Fraser, CSWN Co-editors

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## Table of Contents

Tobii, My Personal Communicator.....	3
Avaz Sri Lanka: The First Sri Lankan AAC App.....	6
Building National Capacity to Support Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) as an Early Intervention Method for Children aged 0-8 Years with Developmental Delay/Disabilities in Croatia .....	8
Circus in St. Petersburg, Russia .....	11
First East Asian Regional Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): Discovering Resources – A Milestone of New Stage of AAC Development in China and Wucaifu experience .....	15
A Science Saturday for All Ages: Presenting AAC at the National Museum of Scotland.....	21
News from Communication Matters (ISAAC UK) .....	27
News from The Bridge School .....	27
International Conference Reminders .....	28
Resources.....	29
Farewell .....	30

## Tobii, My Personal Communicator

*By Sharon Teo, Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Patient, Singapore*

I am delighted to share how my Tobii has given me a new breath of life.



I held managerial roles in my previous organizations. My life had been evolving around computers and phones to communicate with everyone. There were endless emails, enquiries, reports, and presentations to handle. The intended information had to be correct, delivered in a timely way, and clearly understood by the recipients.

I had an active lifestyle before I was diagnosed in 2013 with MND, also known as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). I was swamped with activities for the community and also served as Ambassador at the APEC 2009. APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) 2009 was a series of meetings attended by leaders from 21 APEC member economies to discuss growth and connecting the region.

My friends gradually isolated themselves from me when I could no longer contribute to the community. I looked around to put my time to good use. I volunteered to read stories to children at the child care centres. The teachers were not interested when they saw me in my pushchair. (Unlike a wheelchair, a pushchair has a detectable portion extended from the top of the chair to support my neck and head. As my hands are no longer mobile, I need someone to push me to wherever I want to go.) I have to accept this is reality.

By 2016, I had progressed to advanced stage. My voice grew softer. I could not imagine what my life would be if I have difficulty communicating. I was devastated. I still wanted to communicate. I became the first patient to try out the eye-gaze device under the hospital's *Help Me Speak* initiative when I was hospitalized at the end of 2016.

Today, I would like to share with you my many breakthroughs after I have started using Tobii. I was interviewed by the journalists from The Straits Times and Lianhe Zao Bao on the benefits of using this eye-gaze tracking technology.

I shared my first write-up at the MND Support Group. I touched the speaker button and everyone wondered who was talking. With the help of my Tobii, I became a prominent figure sharing my experience to inspire the patients to adopt a positive outlook in life. It captured the patients' attention. I also wrote games for the patients to socialize and have fun. It was the beginning of my new life with everyone.

I have increased my circle of contacts. I send emails, surf the internet and use WhatsApp to send text, pictures and videos to my friends. More importantly, I get back my privacy because otherwise I have to depend on another person to open my WhatsApp and press the mic icon for me to record my messages. I can also do my write-ups based on my time without having to depend on another person's availability.

I also had the opportunity to work with a medical undergraduate on "Life Stories Exhibition". It aims to encourage patients to live life to the fullest. I wrote about the loss of my family and social support and how I cope with the challenges ahead of me. It was a big project.

My Tobii took me shopping for materials to make door gifts for the MND patients during Christmas! My friend took photos of the fabric and accessories available at the stores and sent by WhatsApp to me. I discussed with him for the best match on the spot. He made the rattan baskets and videotaped the finished items for me. All the patients found the gifts unique and were very happy.



*Rattan baskets as door gifts during Christmas for MND patients at the support group gathering*

There are many projects in my pipeline.

As my hobby is gift wrapping, I guided volunteers to wrap mandarin oranges and hampers for elderly people at the nursing home to celebrate the Lunar New Year. I would not be able to do so without Tobii.



*Mandarin oranges and hampers for the elderly to celebrate Lunar New Year*

I play my favourites like Westlife, Tommy Page, Celine Dion, Yiruma's Greatest Piano Hits and many more as I work on my Tobii. It is so enjoyable!

Tobii has made my life more meaningful. It has become my voice as well as my working partner.

*(Editor's note – Sharon wrote and submitted this article independently using Tobii)*

## Avaz Sri Lanka: The First Sri Lankan AAC App

*By Nimisha Muttiah, Senior Lecturer, Department of Disability Studies (DDS), Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka*

Linguistically and culturally appropriate augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) options are vital in order to facilitate communication among children with complex communication needs (CCN).

In Sri Lanka, AAC options had been limited to using low-tech options such as low-tech communication books and communication boards due to the unavailability of high-tech AAC options.

This, however, changed in November 2017.

In collaboration with the Department of Disability Studies (DDS) University of Kelaniya, Invention Labs the creators of the Avaz app and the National Centre for Cerebral Palsy and other Development Disorders (NCCCPDD) the first Sri Lankan AAC app in local language (Sinhala and Tamil) was developed and launched.

Currently, Avaz Sri Lanka is available only on the iOS platform but a version of this app will be launched on the Android platform soon. The current app has picture, text and the capability to combine words to form phrases and sentences. It also has the capability of programming new vocabulary, editing current vocabulary and deleting words. The vocabulary included in Avaz was identified and programmed by undergraduate speech and language therapy students who ensured that it was culturally and linguistically appropriate to our local context.



This is really a huge leap in the field of AAC in Sri Lanka.



Avaz Sri Lanka will help to create more awareness of AAC and about communication options for children with Complex Communication Needs. Following the launch of the app trainings were conducted for speech and language therapists and other professionals regarding how to use the app. A workshop was also conducted for parents to create awareness about AAC and Avaz Sri Lanka.



This is really an exciting time for AAC in Sri Lanka. I look forward to seeing all the new developments that will emerge as a result of Avaz Sri Lanka.

# Building National Capacity to Support Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) as an Early Intervention Method for Children aged 0-8 Years with Developmental Delay/Disabilities in Croatia

*By Ružica Magušić, Speech and Language Therapist, Zagreb, Croatia*

A big national program supported by UNICEF Croatia and conducted by Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences (FERS, University of Zagreb) started in 2016 and is ongoing. It is a great and first systematic initiative toward strengthening the clinicians to implement AAC into their everyday practice. Primary beneficiaries are professionals, institutions, and CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) in the social, health, and educational sectors: 134 professionals, 31 heads of institutions, 12 CSOs, 8 hospitals, 11 social and educational institutions, and the 6,076 children around the country who are using the services of the institutions. The program has also gathered key stakeholders within the Working Group; included in the program are decision makers (representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Health Insurance Fund, and the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth; representatives of professional associations; a representative of the Ombudsman for Children and Ombudsperson for persons with disabilities; and a parent representative.



*A set of meetings were held with the headmasters of the institutions included in the program to help determinate structural changes and support needed to implement AAC*



Sets of educations and practical workshops, divided into five different modules, together formed a complete education model to support implementing AAC into everyday practice. Around 100 educations and practical workshops were held through the program through the period of 19 months. The educations were conducted by speech and language therapists, special teachers, psychologists, and IT engineers.



*Over 100 education sessions and practical workshops for 134 professionals were held all around the country.*

One of the outcomes of the program is that all the institutions included in the program were provided the necessary AT equipment. This is also one big step forward in helping AAC become a regular field of practice in Croatia. Practical workshops about the use of the donated technology will be provided through the next months.



*UNICEF invested around 226 000 euros in the AT equipment through the program.*



*The Working Group includes people from the Ministries, an AAC specialist, parents and a person who uses AAC.*

Members of the Working Group identified issues, set targets and started taking steps to improve technology, service provision, and especially access to AAC devices and services for people with complex communication needs. A formal structure for providing AAC services will be proposed and an AAC manual is being planned as we continue to work on supporting the development of the AAC in the country. The program is estimated to impact the services for the children up to eight years old. Positive long-term outcomes are planned for all the people with potential to use AAC, regardless of their age or diagnosis.

## Circus in St. Petersburg, Russia



*This article was written by Nadia Browning and reviewed by Anna Eliseeva and the team. Permission was given to post all the photos.*

Imagine a circus with acrobats performing acts that require agility and coordination... most of the time manoeuvring hula hoops and/or ribbons among other props... then add to it music and many other stimuli with that. It is lots of fun for us watching and lots of work for the ones performing and working behind the scenes. This group of dedicated and creative professionals in St Petersburg in Russia decided to prepare young individuals with special needs to join an existing group of able bodied young individuals to perform at the Upsala-Circus (<http://upsalacircus.ru/en/home/>). Upsala-Circus has existed since 2000. Currently, there are 90 children in training in Upsala.

Nov 14, 2017, I met with the coordinator Sasha and the team to learn about the Upsala-Circus. I had seen this group perform before and fell in love with the project. You would certainly have the same reaction.

Sasha explained that this group today has 6 children coming and 1 trainer and 2 tutors. The program has a total of 35 children from 4 to 18 years old. These lovely individuals have Down Syndrome and some also had associated behaviour, sensory and/or other challenges. Five of these 6 are nonverbal. Here is where I came in. The visit was to discuss ideas on how we can maximize the potential of these participants so they can all have the opportunity, if they wish, to join the “main” group.

To be able to join the “main” group, participants require a high level of motivation in addition to a set of skills such as: attention, motor abilities, socialization, and ability to follow instructions and perform. These are high end actors. This small group of six participants were working on developing attention and socializing skills. The session starts with the group forming a circle to greet and do some fun “warm-up” activities. After this they form two lines and do continuous exercises on the mat, one after the other. The exercise starts at one end of the mat and is repeated until they reach the other end of the mat. It involves time, sequence, and of course- great motor skills. The trainer first shows them the exercise and then supports them to do the exercise without bumping into their colleague.

I observed all the session and I met with the group of trainers to discuss their challenges and suggestions. This meeting included all trainers with many questions and ideas.

Anna Eliseeva is the person who initially invited me to Upsala. She is a social worker who dedicates her time to Upsala. She is invested in this program and luckily for me she is fluent in English. You can imagine how hard Anna worked on doing the translation this day!



*Nadia with The Upsala-Circus team Alexandrina Ionova, Natalia Kashina, Irina Daranova, Natalia Kuznetzova, Anastasiya Peshkova, Alexandra Guryanova, Maria Michelson, and Anna Eliseeva*

To summarize our almost two hours of ideas and questions going back and forth, we started talking about general observations and then moved to more communication strategies.

To make it easier to write and read, I have paired up the behaviour or question with the suggestion, discussed in point form.

Behaviour or question - and suggestion:

- Some exercises appeared to be difficult for one or two participants to complete effectively.

Suggestions: Decrease the level of motor requirement and expectations. And once he/she acquired one level, then increase difficulty slowly. Example: the final exercise was to roll and clap. First get the rolling under control then roll and one clap- then build on it. The low tone of a child with Down syndrome can be influencing their performance, in addition to the coordination factor.

- There was one student, "D", who kept running from side to side of the room. Amazingly enough he did not distract the others in the group. However, D would only join the group once in a while. Trainers have been enticing him with eye contact, ribbons, and asking him (inviting him) to join the group.



The coordinator indicated that they would like to (1) extend his time at the mat with the group and (2) after have him perform the activity that the group was doing. Well, that will come after he stays on the mat with the group!!

My question was how do we get him to “want to” join the group when he was having more attention from trainers when he was running around the room!!

Suggestion: let’s try positive reinforcement, meaning reward him for joining the group. D appears to like “massage” and touching, so that can be used as reward. A sign can be given to that and invite him to the mat with that sign. But expect he does some part of the exercise before getting the massage. Then, increase the duration of the exercise required from him to do before getting his massage. We also talked about implementing a sensory diet. One of the trainers has experience with “sensory diet” so she was left in charge of coming up with something that could work in a group setting. Ah! We did talk about him enjoying going into a “box” area. That could be used as a “time to rest” or a reward.

- This one child was noticed to have difficulty copying some exercises. The group and I were not sure why. It could be lack of body awareness, perception of his body in space ... well, we all agreed to explore the reason (s). Meanwhile, the trainer would decrease the difficulty of the exercise and focus on him experiencing success within the activity.

The flow of one exercise into the other was confusing for some of the participants. We discussed adding a sound to represent beginning of a new exercise. Could decrease the gathering of the group each time the exercise starts. We also discussed the use of a symbol base schedule that would be talked about at the initial (circle time) and placed always on the same location in the room.

One (or more) of the trainers offered to follow up on that as they were familiar with this strategy.

Finally, the question on how we can develop more of an interactive communication environment for our non-verbal participants. We started by identifying situations that communication can naturally happen. Those were: requesting a drink or activities during the session, interacting with colleagues, and being able to comment and ask questions.

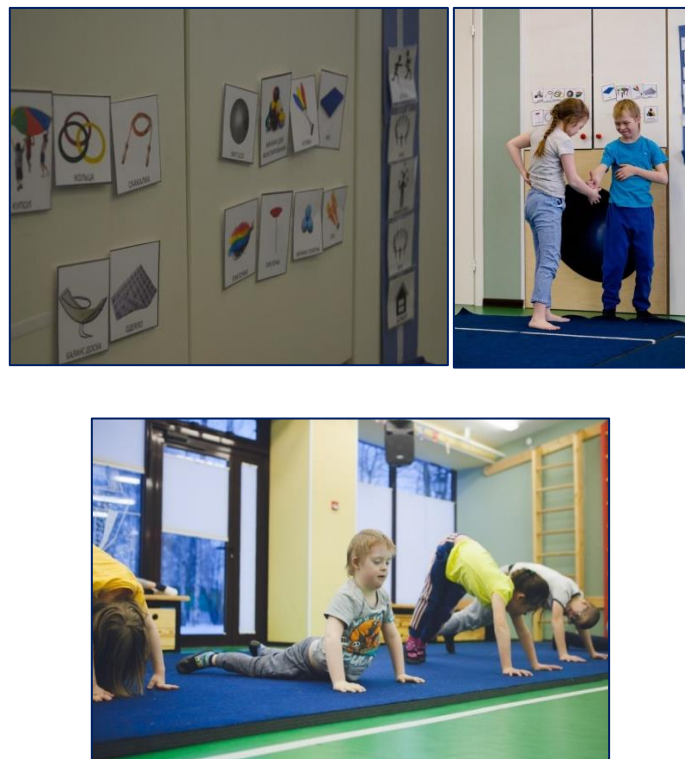
They were all very active children and carrying symbols while exercising was not quite realistic so we talk about the possibility of (1) having signs to indicate “I want a drink”; more/again; all done/stop; and maybe creating signs to represent each child’s name (example, the first letter of their name of something he/she really liked); (2) having symbol boards on a specific and easy access location on the room that allow the participants to comments on the activity and ask questions (easy/ difficult /tired / funny / and others).

The ideas kept coming and as I knew the participants and session dynamics the best, we kept referring to the purpose of each change and what kind of reaction we would like to get with our changes. One important strategy we discussed was the need to introduce signs (consistent and natural gestures) to symbolize actions, such as a hand up means “wait”. Initially they would “teach” that gesture together with words (say and gesture), then try gesturing first and then say the word, and eventually only the gesture. This could increase their ability to focus on the person and decrease the amount of verbal commands and stimulus happening during the session.

At the end of this visit I felt thankful for the exchange of ideas. I learned about what goes on behind the scenes and I hoped the discussion was productive and helpful.

On February 17th of this year, Anna Eliseeva, supervisor and translator involved with Upsala-Circus, sent an email with updates from this group.

They sent videos and a photo of the symbols on the wall to assist with communication.



In one video Sasha and team spoke about how helpful the suggestions were and another video showed our participant D performing his exercise from beginning to end. I really loved seeing D doing better in the group. Thank you to all from Upsala-Circus!



## First East Asian Regional Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): Discovering Resources – A Milestone of New Stage of AAC Development in China and Wucailu experience

*By Mei Liu, Xiuyin(Susan) Fu, Yong (Tony) Liu,  
Wucailu Center for Children with Autism*

The First East Asian Regional Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): Discovering Resources was successfully held in Beijing from 20 - 22 November 2017. The conference was the first one of its type in the field and will certainly benefit the hundreds and thousands of people with little speech or with no speech in China in the future. The conference was organized and sponsored by Wucailu Institute and Wucailu Center for Children with Autism [www.wucailu.com](http://www.wucailu.com).

Menglin Sun, founder and president of Wucailu Group stated in her welcome speech at the opening ceremony that the aims for the conference were : “to bring together professionals working with AAC, researchers, families of children and adults needing AAC and producers and service providers within the field in East Asia, to make visible the resources and competence that exist in East Asia, to promote collaboration and share ideas and knowledge, hence to improve developmental possibilities of children with speech and language disabilities in this region”.

Both ISAAC President-Elect Meredith Allan and Chair of ISAAC Council Aldona Mysakowska-Adamczyk participated in the conference. Over 50 participants were from over 10 countries and regions.

Meredith brought ISAAC greetings to the conference, especially from ISAAC President Gregor Renner, who was unable to attend. He hoped to have the opportunity to meet everyone in the near future.

Aldona mentioned on several occasions that the conference was “a milestone to show a new stage of AAC development in China”.



Several teachers and researchers (An American professor at the conference said creatively that we can call them “teacher researchers”) from Wucailu group presented their studies at the conference with topics for example:

- “Parental attitudes toward AAC influence on children’s communication development”
- Two preschool children with autism spectrum disorder learning AAC in behaviorally oriented early intervention”
- “The adaptation of AAC for Chinese children with autism spectrum disorder – Wucailu experiences”
- “Adapting AAC to Chinese culture”
- “The development of AAC: A case study”
- “Two models for training parents of children with ASD who need AAC”

Wucailu participated in ISAAC biennial conferences in Lisbon, 2014 and in Toronto, 2016 and made presentations of their case studies and posted their research at both conferences. They have registered for ISAAC Conference 2018 on the Gold Coast, Australia, to present their further studies.



Some key persons helping Wucailu develop AAC should be mentioned:

Menglin Sun, founder and board director of Wucailu Group, Dr. Andy Bondy, founder of PECS, Stephen von Tetzchner, professor from University of Oslo, Dr. Kristine Stadsleiv, from Oslo University Hospital, and Shula Friedrich Shilon, Wucailu Adviser, SLP and Special Educator from Israel.

We should especially mention the contribution of Professor Stephen von Tetzchner on AAC development in China. His English version of textbook written with co-author Professor Harald Martinsen, titled "Introduction to Augmentative and Alternative Communication," was translated into Chinese by Wucailu and Peking Normal University, and published in 2011. It was the first textbook of its kind in China. Since then Professor von Tetzchner has been visiting China once or twice a year. Three years ago we started a three-year study program led by him with an international AAC promotion team. He has been visiting our Wucailu Centers twice a year, to train our teachers, parents, to observe our classes and help us to improve our teaching in respects of the application of AAC, especially in our group teaching.

He helped us to hold several workshops as well to train leading teachers from all over China. Under his help, Wucailu has now become a pioneer institution in China, to promote the application of AAC in early intervention especially for children with ASD.



Wucailu is one of the earliest and largest institutions to develop AAC in China. In 2008 Dr. Andy Bondy visited Wucailu Shunyi campus and trained our teachers in PECS system. The next year in 2009 professor Stephen von Tetzchner met with Menglin Sun, founder of Wucailu, at an international conference and started collaboration with each other since then. But it did take some time to get more and more people knowing about AAC in China.

In summer of 2015 Wucailu Center for Children with Autism held a training program sponsored by Rehabilitation Section, China Disabled Persons' Federation for "Leading Persons" from over 60 institutions engaging intervention for children with ASD all over China. During the class we asked "who had ever heard about AAC before"? Only two persons raised their hands among 60 attendants. Over 10 people had heard about "The Picture Exchange Communication System –PECS."

In October 2016, we, Wucailu, further organized a very specialized workshop to promote Augmentative and Alternative Communication for over 80 leading teachers from institutions in the field all over China, topics including general introduction to AAC, its application in families with children who have autism spectrum disorders, Joint Attention, Symbolic Play, Engagement and Regulation (JASPER model of intervention), etc.

Professor Stephen von Tetzchner, Associated Professor Anett Kaale from University of Oslo, Dr. Kristine Stadsleiv, Professor Shula Shilon, and Dr. Xueyun Su from East China Normal University joined the workshop and made presentations. The workshop was sponsored by Rehabilitation Section, China Disabled Persons' Federation again, and also by us, Wucailu group. It turned out a big success. With more and more people knowing about AAC, we expect its impact in the relative field will be much wider.





The focus on AAC came as a natural consequence of an increased attention to the variety of training methods that are available for children with autism spectrum disorders in China. There was thus a shift from a traditional method-centred orientation to child-centred orientation. Each child with autism spectrum disorders is unique, with his or her own needs, strengths and weaknesses.

Instead of a one-method-for-all approach, the challenge of Wucailu now is to give individually adapted interventions, which are “tailored” on the basis of knowledge about the developmental characteristics of children with autism spectrum disorders in general, as well as a broad assessment of the ability profile and the personality of each child.

AAC represents a means of communication that enables children with little or no speech to improve their communication and language, their problem solving and self-regulation and

increase their social understanding and participation. With the broader understanding and application of the skills, those children in need will definitely benefit from it. We hope to contribute more our shares of experiences with others in the related fields.



Finally, let's meet at ISAAC 2018 on the Gold Coast of Australia. Let's work together and exchange ideas and share experiences for better lives and a better future for people all over the world.



*Aldona Mysakowska-Adamczyk, ISAAC Council Chair, with conference mascot ISAAC the Moose*



# A Science Saturday for All Ages: Presenting AAC at the National Museum of Scotland

*By Rolf Black, Researcher and Rehab Engineer*

*AAC Research Group at the University of Dundee, UK. Director: Professor Annalu Waller*

*Web: <https://aac.dundee.ac.uk/>*

Even though some of the most famous people in the world use AAC, many people still only know little about how AAC works and how slow communication really is. Prof Stephen Hawking, who died recently, appeared regularly in the media, but people seldom realised that most of his public speeches were pre-recorded and that he was only able to communicate at two words per minute when he spoke “live”.

In February this year, the AAC Research Group at the University of Dundee was out to showcase and discuss AAC at one of the wonderful places we have for this purpose: The National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. During a Science Saturday we presented a variety of interactive demonstrations to allow the visitors to engage with AAC and learn what it means to use assistive technology when accessing a computer for speech output and communication.



The majority of funding for our AAC research in Dundee comes from the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). Projects such as “STANDUP - System to Augment Non-speakers' Dialogue Using Puns,” “How was School Today?” and our current project, “ACE-LP – Augmenting Communication using Environmental Data to Drive Language Prediction,” have taken advantage of computing power to support and improve language development and communication.

The “Telling Tales of Engagement” funding by EPSRC allows us to organise a number of public engagement events, including the Science Saturday, to inform about and engage the public with our research.

Researchers and students developed activities to illustrate the use of AAC and encourage the visitors to reflect on the situation of not being able to use natural speech for communication.

On the day, people explored the different activities more than a thousand times. They learned new things about AAC, ranging from using any part of your body to step scan a keyboard for speech output to the very origins of synthetic speech by building their own mechanical vowel resonator.

Here some examples of the activities of the day:

### *Breaking Down the Communication Wall*

(Sarah Wadsworth, AAC MSc Student)

*How would you feel if you weren't able speak to your friends and family? What are some of the things you couldn't do if you weren't able to speak? How would you feel if people didn't talk to you just because you couldn't speak?*

Visitors were encouraged to write their answers on note paper and stick to one side of the wall using appropriate emoji's.



But it is not about the wall, it's about breaking down the barriers which limit communication. So the other side of the wall was used for suggestions and emotions on how it would feel if you were able to speak using other means than your natural speech.

*If you couldn't speak, how might you feel if someone taught you another way to communicate? If you can't speak what are some of the other ways to communicate?*



### *Painting With Your Eyes*

(Chris Norrie, AAC PhD Student, with Debbie Breslin, Tobii Dynavox)

The use of eye gaze has now reached the mainstream market with the latest MS Windows operating system supporting eye gaze for everyone. We demonstrated the use of eye gaze to interact with your computer by inviting the visitors to use their gaze to paint their very own Jackson Pollock painting<sup>1</sup>. Visitors could experience first-hand (eye) what it means to use your eyes not just for exploring your environment but also to interact with it and take home their very own eye gaze painting.



### *STANDUP – The Accessible Joking Computer*

(Graeme Ritchie, University of Aberdeen, and Helen Pain, University of Edinburgh)

How do we learn how language works? Not just the meaning of words and how to put them together into sentences, but how to use language to create stories, share experiences and even entertain? Children go through a phase in their language acquisition where they explore jokes and puns. Who hasn't experienced the joy of being the guinea pig for a new joke, created by a six-year-old. But how do you learn the art of jokes when it is really difficult to experiment with language? With our STANDUP project (in collaboration with the

<sup>1</sup> <http://jacksonpollock.org/>

Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh) we gave children with complex communication needs an accessible joke generator to create novel jokes and try them on an audience. At the Science Saturday you could learn about how a computer creates jokes and experience how bad they could be. You can try out the joke generator online at [joking.abdn.ac.uk](http://joking.abdn.ac.uk).



### *Chatting like Stephen Hawking*

(Nathan McMahon, Honours Student)

How do you control a computer just with a switch? How can you interact with a switch? The children at the National Museum had no qualms trying out anything they could think of. From hand to foot to chin, any moving body part was used to speak your mind on our iPads with row column scanning switch access.





## *Make Your Own Vowel Resonator*

(Ladan Safiee, PhD Student)

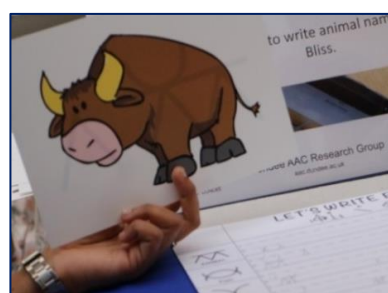
How to you generate synthetic speech? What makes speech? Exploring the first steps to create artificial speech, children could create vowel resonators as used in early automatons.<sup>2</sup>



## *Let's Write BLISS*

(Hasith Nandadasa, AAC PhD Student)

How can you use special symbols that do not represent sounds to write? Experimenting with Bliss, children invented new Bliss names for animals by describing them using Bliss symbols.



<sup>2</sup>Manual for building the resonators by Mark Huckvale, UCL:

<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/mark/vowels/>

## *Can You Talk with your Hands?*

(Liam Todd with Lorretta Reynolds, AAC MSc Students)

This is not about sign language but on our use of gestures in communication. Our AAC MSc students explored with the visitors how much information you can share using gestures.



## *Alan McGregor - Disability, no speech. So?*

Alan, an Honorary Researcher at the University of Dundee, gave a short talk on life without speech. Alan has used many electronic devices for communication, he talked about his work, passion, hobbies and challenges. The audiences then engaged in lengthy conversations with Alan touching on a wide range of topics.

## *The Talking Brooch*

Finally ... and getting a bit nostalgic ... we equipped all our team members with a modern version of the “Talking Brooch” as discussed by our emeritus Professor Alan Newel in the early 70s. The eye-catching brooches worn by all the student volunteers and staff members not only displayed their names and our research group logo but also flashed bright blue with additional prompts for interaction.



For more information on our work, please visit our website: [aac.dundee.ac.uk](http://aac.dundee.ac.uk).



## News from Communication Matters (ISAAC UK)

The Communication Access UK (CAUK) project aims to increase communication accessibility in businesses and organisations throughout the UK.

### *Update January 2018*

“It was really exciting to hear before Christmas that CM had been awarded the second year of funding for the pilot stage of Communication Access UK. Even though the symbol selection is still in the consultation phase, all other objectives had been met in the first year. This funding will ensure that work can continue with the recruitment of more mystery customers across the UK and will support the training of people to become workshop presenters in preparation for when the symbol is launched later this year.”

This is the link for more information on the project:

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/page/communication-access-uk>

## News from The Bridge School

[Applications for the International Teacher in Residence program for 2018-2019 are available now!](#) The application deadline is May 25, 2018. For more information, visit the [ISAAC website](#) and <http://www.bridgeschool.org/outreach/teacher-in-residence/>.

## International Conference Reminders



### **Important Notice: ISAAC Council Meeting 2018**

In accordance with section 11.4 of the Bylaws of ISAAC, this is the official notification of the date, time, and location of the upcoming ISAAC **Council Meeting**, taking place at the 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial ISAAC Conference.

Date: Sunday, July 22, 2018  
Time: 9:00 to 17:00  
Location: Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, 684-2690  
Gold Coast Hwy, Broadbeach QLD 4218, Australia  
Room: TBA

*Called by the Chair of the Council,  
Aldona Mysakowska-Adamczyk  
February 9, 2018*

### **Important Notice: ISAAC Biennial Membership and Awards Meeting 2018**

In accordance with section 8.1.5 of the Bylaws of ISAAC, this is the official notification of the date, time, and location of the upcoming ISAAC Biennial **Membership Meeting**, taking place at the 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial ISAAC Conference.

Date: Wednesday, July 25, 2018  
Time: 14:00 to 15:00  
Location: Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, 684-2690  
Gold Coast Hwy, Broadbeach QLD 4218, Australia  
Room: TBA

*Called by the Chair of the Council,  
Aldona Mysakowska-Adamczyk  
February 9, 2018*

Communication Matters International AAC Conference is the UK's leading annual AAC event 9-11 September 2018, University of Leeds

A diverse program of plenaries, presentations, posters and exhibition held over two and a half days. <https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/page/conference>

Annual ATAAC international conference in Zagreb, Croatia 17-19 October 2018

Lectures by speakers who are not presenting in English will be simultaneously interpreted in English. <http://www.ataac.eu/>

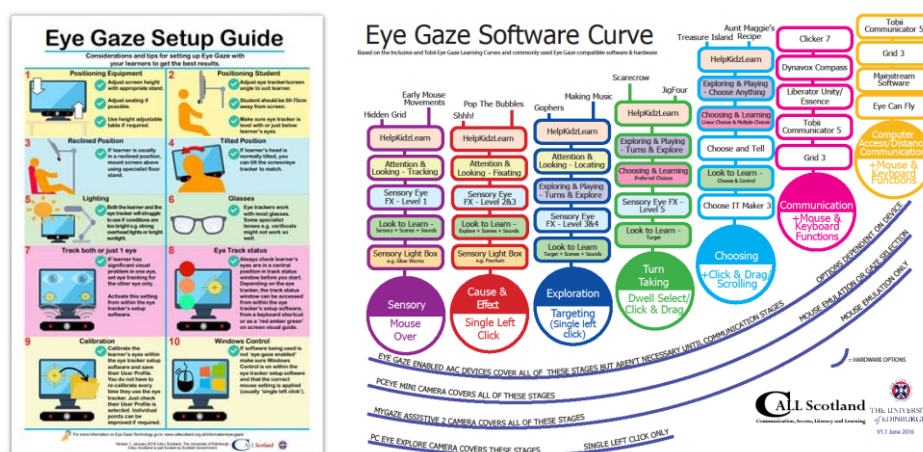
This year there will be a double conference. After the international conference in Zagreb there will be a national ATAAC conference 22-23 October in Belgrade, Serbia, with international presenters [www.ataac.eu/beograd](http://www.ataac.eu/beograd)

## Resources

<http://www.cdacanada.com/projects/access-to-healthcare/> "Things to think about when considering access to healthcare for patients who have communication disabilities. Samples of communication accommodations and supports."

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/resources> This includes a link to eLearning, with a 20-minute course from Communication Matters <http://www.aacelearning.org.uk/>

<http://www.callscotland.org.uk> "A useful poster, highlighting considerations and tips for setting up Eye Gaze with your learners to get the best results. It covers positioning, lighting, tracking, calibration and other important aspects of setup and is designed to be referred to by staff when aspects of setup and is designed to be referred to by staff when setting up eye gaze with pupils on a day to day basis. The poster is designed to be printed in A3."



## Farewell

We would like to thank all those who contributed information for this edition of our newsletter.

The next edition will be published in December. The format is Calibri Font 12 with a guideline of approximately 4 pages and 5 photos.

Anyone wishing to submit articles and news please send by the beginning of November to us at the following addresses:

[nadiabrowning@gmail.com](mailto:nadiabrowning@gmail.com) and [dotfraser2@gmail.com](mailto:dotfraser2@gmail.com)

We look forward to hearing from you,

*Nadia and Dorothy*