

Message from the ISAAC President

Juan Bornman

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness... it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Can it be true that Charles Dickens wrote these words in 1859 and not in 2021? Can it be true that *A Tale of Two Cities* is set in the French Revolution and not in the COVID-19 global pandemic?

This Dickens novel presents the same paradox that we are currently experiencing all across the world. As 2020 morphed into 2021 – mostly without the glitz and the glamour, sans the carefree celebration in crowds – we were faced with the stark reality that the coronavirus, now accompanied by a collection of new variants, was still with us. History is taking a new turn, marking an era unlike any other. In some parts of the world, it is indeed the best of times, with vaccination programs being rolled out effectively, while in other parts of the world, the vaccination programs are crippled by corruption. For some of us technology is making our lives easier by allowing online interaction, hybrid teaching, and global networking through a myriad of applications, while a shortage of devices, expensive data, and unstable electricity networks cause a daily quagmire for others of us. Some of us see light and hope, others see darkness and despair.... Some people are more optimistic and hopeful by nature, the "glass half-full" types, but even they need a little reassurance every

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now and then, that things will get better. There are days when we all feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and ready to give up.

In 2021, *hope* is our most powerful weapon. It is a choice we make – a reminder that we will get stronger. We decide to trust life. History is filled with inspiring deeds of men and women – and we, too, have the inner resources to cope with whatever comes our way. Hope leads to positive expectations; it is a catalyst for change. Sometimes it's that tiny spark that has the potential to pull us from the depths of despair. Sometimes it's like a tidal wave that washes over us, with enough force to share



*Hope reminds us that
we are not alone*

with others around us. There's hardly anything better that we can do for others. Whatever the cause, hope has the power to make you do the impossible. It is like a star – we cannot see it when the sun shines brightly, but we can when the night is at its darkest – helping us to see amidst all the darkness around us.

Hope reminds us that we are not alone. Our ISAAC family is one example. Today we need to out-think, out-work, and out-care for each other. As a volunteer membership organization, we have been called to be innovative, to do things differently, and we need to heed that call. We decided to combine the power of hope with that of action. The [ISAAC Connect](#) global event is one such an example of an opportunity to

launch our hope with dreams for the future.



In this season when international travel is restricted, we are excited about the opportunities offered by technology as we trust that more ISAAC members from all over the world will be able to join this amazing opportunity to connect, share, and network without the physical and financial challenges brought on by in-person conferences for some of our members. We have high expectations for this event.

Mother Theresa reminded us that life is an opportunity – that we should benefit from it; it is a struggle and we should accept it as such; it is a song, which we should sing; an adventure, which we should take; a game that we should play; beauty, which we should admire; a promise that we should fulfil. Eventually everything will fall into place. After all, H.O.P.E. is an acronym for **Have Only Positive Expectations!**

In these times, let's conclude with another classic, "Crime and Punishment," in which Fyodor Dostoyevsky almost prophetically wrote:

"But that is the beginning of a new story – the story of the gradual renewal of a man ... of his passing from one world into another, of his initiation into a new unknown life. That might be the subject of a new story, but our present story is ended."

May your new story be filled with light and H.O.P.E.

Juan

[Juan Bornman](#)

ISAAC President 2020 -2022

From the Executive Director

Franklin Smith

Welcome to the April 2021 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

I began my previous few messages with a synopsis of COVID-related news from here in Toronto. I am going to refrain from doing so this time, quite simply because we can relate essentially the same news to each other, regardless of where in the world one lives. We all continue to deal, on a day-by-day basis, with the realities of living life under a pandemic. In some countries, restrictions are limited; in others they are more profound. Some continue to see large scale virus transmission; others are perhaps seeing some relief owing to the distribution of one or more vaccines.

Wherever in the world each of us is located, we all share a basic concern – the welfare of those in our personal and professional networks, and the impact of the pandemic on those who live and work daily with, or on behalf of, AAC. So, to each one of us, please remember that our personal strength not only derives from within each of us, but is also derived from our extended global AAC family!

Conference 2020 – Now Postponed to 2022

Given the continuing international border closures, travel restrictions, and continued personal health risks associated with the COVID pandemic, ISAAC has taken the decision to once again postpone Conference 2020.

ISAAC Conference 2020 is now scheduled to take place between July 30th and August 4th, 2022.



ISAAC remains committed to hosting Conference 2020 at the Cancún International Convention Center in Cancún, México.

ISAAC has posted a number of documents on our [website](#) related to this postponement, all of which can be accessed, downloaded, and shared.

ISAAC Connect

ISAAC is thrilled to announce we will be presenting our first ever fully virtual event,



[ISAAC Connect](#), taking place between August 9th and August 12th, 2021. We already have many highly esteemed AAC researchers and clinicians confirmed as speakers and presenters, and we plan on announcing more details in the coming weeks.

Online registration for ISAAC Connect is scheduled to open by the beginning of April 2021. A separate eblast will be sent when the registration portal is about to open.

In the meantime, you can access additional information about ISAAC Connect, including registration pricing and tentative list of speakers, from our event website, [here](#).

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From the Executive Director ...continued



ISAAC Webinars

We continue to see positive feedback to our recently announced changes to our ISAAC webinar platform.

During March 2021, ISAAC presented a major panel discussion webinar on the topic of Data Privacy and Security in AAC, that was extremely well attended, and we are planning on hosting many more webinars during the year. The majority of our webinars are available to members only, so please make sure let all your friends, families, and colleagues know that to access our full library of materials, they should become a member this year!

We are looking forward to presenting a large number of online webinar events this year, so please make sure you read your emails and visit our website regularly, as each webinar will be announced in advance.

Membership Renewal 2021

Over 700 2021 Membership Renewal packages, with multiple reminders, have now been sent out via email to current and past members of ISAAC, representing membership in ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-US (USSAAC), and ISAAC International. If you are one of these current or past members of ISAAC and did not receive an email with your personalized 2021 membership renewal package, please send an email to membership@isaac-online.org.

If you have any other questions related to your membership, please send an email to our Membership Coordinator, Carol Silverberg, at carol@isaac-online.org.

We are thrilled with the response so far with 2021 membership renewal!

If you are an ISAAC member through one of our other Chapters who manage their own membership, please contact your Chapter directly to inquire about 2021 membership renewal.

ISAAC International Emergency Preparedness

The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of risk management, emergency preparedness, and strategic planning. Fortunately, we here at the ISAAC International office remain well positioned to manage our association during this challenging time, thanks to the efforts and ongoing positive engagement of our staff and volunteer leadership.

On December 18th, 2020, ISAAC International reached out via email to the ISAAC Council, advising them of an association with a US-based company called Hytropy, inviting all Council members to participate in a program of developing emergency preparedness plans for their respective Chapters and/or country operations.

We look forward to engaging with our Council members on this initiative.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly, at franklin@isaac-online.org, should you require any further information or assistance.

Regards and thanks,

Franklin Smith
ISAAC Executive Director

Messages from ISAAC's President and Executive Director are available in French, Italian, and Portuguese translation on our [website](#).



Chapter News

ISAAC-Denmark



We had a delayed digital assembly in November, welcoming a new chairman Ulla Eichenauer, and three new board members:

Ida Mundt, Helene Leismann and Anne-Lise Laursen. Of course, we were sad to say goodbye to Birgitte Brandt (above left, with Margit GrønkJær) as our very competent chairman for eight years; perhaps some of you know her from international conferences.

But we have been starting 2021 with new power, new competences, and new eyes on many subjects, which has turned out to be very fruitful. For instance, we will get a better design in our magazine and new ideas in editing the content. The new members also have resources from many educational and research environments; we are already profiting of this, and we are looking forward to their input in the time coming.

Webinars

Our conference was cancelled twice of reasons, we all sadly know (corona). But we decided to bring the content of the planned conference to people's homes in digital form by planning a webinar each month. If you understand Danish and want to see the whole list of seminars, please visit [ISAAC.dk](#).




Communication Support World Network Newsletter

The **Communication Support World Network Newsletter**, published twice yearly, focuses on stories of challenges and hope from emerging AAC countries around the world. [Click here](#) to access the CSWN Newsletter archives. Watch for a new issue, coming up in the near future!



Russian Translation Now Available!

Communication Without Speech: Augmentative and Alternative Communication Around the World, by the late Anne Warrick (former editor of the CSWN Newsletter), published in 1998 is now available in Russian,

translated by Inna Ryzanova and edited by Olga Checherina (2021). "We are very excited to make this translation available through the ISAAC website," says Nadia Browning, Chair of the ISAAC Council. "Sharing information and promoting the use of AAC throughout the world is the heart of ISAAC's mission." The Russian-language translation of *Communication Without Speech* is posted in the [News section of the ISAAC website](#), under Recent Posts.

Chapter News ... continued



ISAAC-Denmark, continued

The following seminars will be presented in English:

June 9th 2021, 1 p.m. GMT



MaryAnn Ronski, Ph.D., Regents Professor of Communication, Psychology and Communication Sciences & Disorders, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA



Rose Ann Sevcik, Ph.D., Regents Professor of Psychology, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Myths and Realities in AAC Service Delivery will provide an overview of myths that have hampered the use of AAC with both children and adults with disabilities. Evidence to refute the appropriateness of these myths and present strategies for how to debunk them will be described.

Parent Coached AAC Language Intervention for Toddlers and Preschoolers will focus on coaching parents to use AAC language intervention strategies with their toddlers and preschoolers. The role of receptive and expressive language skills, the importance of speech-generating devices (SGD), the role of parents, and protocols for implementing parent-coached augmented language interventions will be described.

November the 9th 2021, 1 p.m. GMT

Tom Griffiths, Clinical Scientist in Communication Aid Service, based in Cambridge, UK. Tom is in the final stages of a doctoral thesis at University College London, looking at the development of early eye-gaze access skills in children with cerebral palsy.



Eyes on Communication will report on the design, administration and results of a recently conducted Delphi study, looking to achieve consensus on what should be included in upcoming clinical guidelines for use of eye-gaze technology for people with cerebral palsy. The session will discuss the study and present the proposed guidelines.

Are you interested in the above seminars? Please send an email to margit99@gmail.com.

Cooperation on the political level

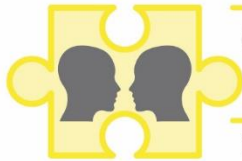
ISAAC has been invited to have our say on matters like Denmark's official website on AAC, recommendations on how to help people with acquired brain damage, and recommendations for the national strategy in acquiring support in AAC solutions. We can advise, and only pray that they will listen. But we will persist and keep on insisting on the right to communicate.

- submitted by Margit Grønkjær, International Contact, [ISAAC-Denmark](#)

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Chapter News

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Communication
Matters
more than just talking

Communication Matters (ISAAC-UK)

Communication Matters International AAC Conference 2021

We have been advised that, sadly, it will not be possible to have any face-to-face element of the conference again this September. This is a huge disappointment, but the decision has been made with the safety of everyone involved in mind.

What this does mean is that we have six months to plan a fantastic virtual event and we will aim, like *The CM Sessions* from 2020, to give you all a feel for the CM conference you have come to love! If you have never presented at a conference before, maybe this could be the year? Read the Call for Papers on the [CM Blog](#) to find out more.

You can be sure we will include some social sessions, suppliers' sessions, and opportunities to learn from others about inventive ways of supporting people who use AAC and their families.

Please put the dates in your diaries now! The CM2021 virtual conference will take place from **Monday 13th – Friday 17th September 2021**. Please follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) for updates about the conference. If you would like to be added to our mailing list please email admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

Communication Matters Mentoring Project

This is our third year of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund for our mentoring project and we have a wonderful range of qualifications for people who use AAC in England, including personal and social development, mentoring, and employability.

All sessions are free and delivered via Zoom or Teams, and learners can complete workbooks and activities from their own home. We are working with Creativity in Practice Ltd, who will provide 1-1 support and guidance. They can also help with setting up a local peer mentoring project in school or college, or through another service. We are currently exploring options to host similar projects in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

For more information about any of these opportunities, [visit our website](#).

USSAAC (ISAAC-US)

USSAAC is a co-sponsor of the ISAAC Biennial Conference to be held in 2022, in Cancún, México. One project we are working on addresses communication access during conferences - both onsite and virtual. Expect to see some guidelines, materials and resources to help presenters and participants engage more fully in ISAAC-sponsored conferences. Named NAACA (North American Alliance for Communication Access), the task force includes the conference co-chairs from México, USSAAC Board Members, Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC), and ISAAC Canada Executive Board members.

Feature



VOICE AI: Meet the 1st African American English Digital Voice!

An initiative by Acapela Group, AssistiveWare, PRC and Tobii Dynavox

After announcing the decision almost one year ago to provide more diversity options for individuals who use digital voices, [Acapela Group](#) has succeeded in furthering its mission to provide a voice for all by developing the first African American English (AAE) digital voice. Nicolas Mazars, Inclusive Product Owner at the award-winning Acapela Group, has proudly unveiled *Tamira*. “We are grateful to the AAC community for their precious contribution through the full process,” says Mazars. A male and two children’s voices will be released soon.

Kevin Williams and Lateef McLeod, current and former ISAAC VPs for LEAD (respectively), coordinated input from ISAAC’s LEAD Committee for this project.

Full story and a voice sample for *Tamira* can be found [here](#).

Acapela is grateful to the partners who helped spread the word and collect feedback on this initiative.

For more information, contact:

[Acapela Group](#) – Email to Nicolas Mazars – nicolas.mazars@acapela-group.com

[AssistiveWare](#) – Email to David Niemeijer – voices@assistiveware.com

[PRC – Saltillo](#) – Email to Dave Hershberger – voices@prc-saltillo.com

[Tobii Dynavox](#) – Email to Bob Cunningham – bob.cunningham@tobiidynavox.com

April is Autism Acceptance Month

A number of AAC vendors will be discounting their apps for several days during April – a unique opportunity to get great products at a much lower cost.

Thanks to Lauren S. Enders, who created this graphic to illustrate where and when you’ll find all the sales. Click on the image to see a larger version.

Autism Acceptance Month AAC & Educational App Sales
March - April 2021

All Avaz Apps
Avaz AAC, Avaz AAC Lifetime Edition, MDA Avaz Reader for Dyslexia, Free Speech
50% off reg. prices (Avaz LT reg. \$199.99*)
April 1 - 15
VPP, W, iOS only
Includes all Avaz apps in all languages

Predictable, Charitable, & Scene & Heard
50% off reg. prices (Predictable reg. \$159.99*)
March 30 - April 6
VPP, W (English version only), iOS

WordTook: Language Learning Video Modeling App
\$6.99 (reg. \$11.99*)
April 1 - 30
VPP, W, iPad only

Choiceworks \$6.99 (reg. \$14.99*)
Choiceworks Calendar \$4.99 (reg. \$9.99*)
Choiceworks Bundle \$9.99 (reg. \$20.99*)
March 30 - April 6
VPP, W, iOS only

LAMP Words for Life
50% off lifetime account (reg. \$299.99*)
April 2 - 8
VPP, W, iOS only
Does not include in-app purchases

Talk Suite Free
April 1 - 15 2/3 off (sale price \$64.99)
April 15 - 30 1/2 off (sale price \$29.99)
W, iPad only

Speak for Yourself
50% off (reg. \$299.99*)
April 1 - 8
VPP, W, iOS only

IOS: Proloquo2Go, Proloquo4Text, Keeble, Pictello, & Gateway
Also included: On-Demand AAC Training Videos
All apps on sale 50% off reg. prices (Proloquo2Go reg. \$249.99*; Proloquo4Text reg. \$119.99*)
March 30 - April 6
VPP, W

VPP = Additional 50% off purchase of 20 copies or more on iOS apps through Apple's Volume Purchase Program for schools or educational organizations (7% off total)
* = Worldwide (Sale prices based on the U.S. dollar and may vary in other countries)

Lauren S. Enders, MA, CCC-SLP

Resources

Communication Without Speech: Augmentative and Alternative Communication Around the World (1998), by Anne Warrick, is now available in [Russian translation](#).

[Free Online Instructional Resources](#) are available to support selected chapters in Beukelman & Light (2020), from Penn State University and the RERC on AAC .

[Using Core Words in the Classroom: Some Guidelines](#) by Erna Alant Consultancy, January 2021

Believe That All Can Achieve: Increasing classroom participation in learners with special support needs (3rd edition) by Juan Bornman

Recently announced by the [Centre for AAC](#) in Pretoria, the third edition of *Believe That All Can Achieve: Increasing classroom participation in learners with special support needs* is hot off the press.

ISAAC President Juan Bornman explains that this book embraces the core values of the South African Constitution: freedom, dignity, and equality. It shares best practice, evidence-based techniques, and strategies to build a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by learners and teachers in our country.

Believe That All Can Achieve celebrates diversity in the classroom and capitalizes on the strengths that each individual learner brings to the learning-teaching dyad. It is published by Van Schaik Publishers. More information [here](#).



The Nika Project



The Nika Project is a non-profit organization that exists to gather and distribute repurposed assistive technology around the globe. The first step in The Nika Project's process is to gather potential [assistive technology devices](#). These include both low-tech and high-tech devices, but high-tech devices, such as iPhones, iPads, and Android phones, offer the most versatility.

For information on how to donate of AAC devices and for instructions on how to submit a request for a device, click [here](#). *Global AAC* directs all contributions, as well as monetary donations, to the Nika Project.

For more about ISAAC's work in supporting AAC in emerging AAC countries, contact [Miroslav Vrankic](#) (Croatia), Vice-President for [ISAAC BUILD AAC](#).

Data Privacy and Security for AAC

On March 30th ISAAC International hosted an outstanding two-hour webinar presentation and panel discussion on *Data Privacy and Security in AAC*. Listen to the archived recording [here](#), open and available for all to enjoy.

New USSAAC Webinar: Diversity in AAC Apps, April 28th, 2021

More information and the registration link are available on the [ISAAC website](#).

Chapters

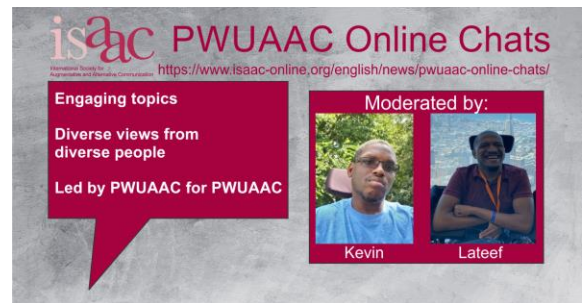


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Contact Us

Do you have a question or comment?
Please feel free to send an email to
feedback@isaac-online.org

PWUAAC Online Chats



Visit [PWUAAC Online Chats](https://www.isaac-online.org/english/news/pwuaac-online-chats/) on the ISAAC website for information about the next scheduled chat.

ISAAC Webinars

As of January 2021, most ISAAC webinars and archived recordings are available as a benefit of membership, and accessed through the Members' Only portal. A limited number of [webinar recordings](#) will remain open to the public. Find out how to become an ISAAC member [here](#).



Our Vision & Mission



ISAAC's Vision is that AAC will be recognized, valued and used throughout the world.

ISAAC's Mission is to promote the best possible communication for people with complex communication needs.

ISAAC is a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic & Social Council.

Stay Connected

ISAAC Chapters and members worldwide are invited to submit items of interest from your country or region. News, AAC practice tips, research, personal essays, in article format or as a link to online articles or resources, will be reviewed and made available on the ISAAC website as appropriate. Please send articles and photos to [Nola Millin](#).

Stay Social

Stay in the loop! Follow ISAAC news & views in the AAC community on our social media!



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Comments welcome! Please
contact [Heather Stonehouse](#).

