

Message from the ISAAC President

Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli



Dear ISAAC Family,

It gives me great pleasure to write this first message as ISAAC President.

I am very excited to be working with all of you over the coming two years given all the wonderful events and projects that are being planned.

I have become an ISAAC member in the late 80's and had attended my first ISAAC conference in 2004 in Natal, Brazil. It was a memorable and incredible event. Over the years, I have been lucky enough to attend and present at most ISAAC conferences since 2004. In these conferences I have met and become friends with so many fantastic people from

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around the world who continue to enrich my personal and professional life. ISAAC conferences have always been, for me, a great joy.

As I reflect on this journey and my past two years as ISAAC President-Elect, it's important to acknowledge the incredible volunteer work done by the multinational and multicultural group of dedicated individuals on the ISAAC International Executive Board. Your commitment to our mission transcends borders and cultures, uniting us in a shared vision of empowerment and inclusion.

Executive Board

I wish to thank all the outgoing executive board members:

- **Miroslav Vrankic (Croatia)**, Vice-President of BUILD for 4 years.
- **Gabriela Berlanga (Mexico)**, Vice-President without Portfolio for 6 years, with responsibility for the biennial ISAAC Conference Cancún.
- **Signhild Skogdal (Norway)**, Chair of the ISAAC Council for 3 years.
- **Kevin Williams (USA)**, Vice-President of LEAD for 4 years.

Beata Batorowicz (Canada), Chair of the ISAAC Research Committee for 5 years.

This diverse team has brought together a wealth of perspectives, ideas, and experiences, enriched our initiatives, and expanded our reach. From organizing events to advocating for accessibility, your hard work has made a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve. Together, we have demonstrated that when we collaborate across cultures, we can create innovative solutions that resonate on a global scale.

I would like to welcome our new Executive Board:

- **Neil Hansen (UK)**, President-Elect
- **Claudia Marimón Rigollet (Chile)**, Vice-President of BUILD
- **Lateef McLeod (USA)**, Vice-President of LEAD
- **Yoosun Chung (USA)**, Chair-Elect of the ISAAC Council
- **Usha Dalvi (India)**, Vice-President without Portfolio
- **Catia Walter (Brazil)**, Chair the ISAAC Council
- **Elena Radici (Italy)**, Vice-President without Portfolio

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- **Kristine Stadskleiv (Norway)**, Research
Committee Chair

As we continue this important work, I am reminded of the words of Helen Keller: *“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”* This sentiment encapsulates the spirit of our organization and the profound impact we can achieve when we work together as one.

I am moving into this important position with the hope that in these next two years, we will continue the amazing work of ISAAC together.

AAC Awareness Month

AAC Awareness Month in October wrapped up with the "Vibes of AAC" virtual event, which was a huge success with global participation. This event could not have happened without the work and dedication of our volunteer team.

*Messages from ISAAC's
President and Executive
Director are available in
French, Italian, and
Portuguese translation on
our website.*

Membership

I thank you all for being members and being dedicated and passionate about AAC. I urge you [to renew your membership](#) with your local ISAAC chapter or ISAAC International.

As December holds various holidays that are coming up around the world, I want to wish everyone joy and fulfillment during the holiday season; I wish you happiness, peace, and health. Greetings to you and your families!

I look forward to a productive and joyful 2025.

[Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli](#)

ISAAC President



(ISAAC Presidents Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli, Tracy Shepherd, Juan Bornman, and Meredith Allan at ISAAC Conference Cancún in 2023)

From the Executive Director



Franklin Smith

Welcome to the December 2024 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

The final few months of every calendar year is always a busy time here at the ISAAC International office, and this year is no exception!

ISAAC Membership 2025

Membership renewal notification emails were sent to all [ISAAC-Australia](#), [ISAAC-Canada](#), [ISAAC-Español](#), [ISAAC-US \(USSAAC\)](#), and [ISAAC International](#) members, during November, 2024.

New or renewing members for these Chapters / International members, can make use of our [online membership portal](#) to renew an existing membership, or take out a new membership.

During the final work week of December, we will also be sending out first reminder notifications to these renewing members.

If you are an ISAAC member through one of our other Chapters, we look forward to you renewing your membership for 2025 through your Chapter

directly. Please do watch for communication from them regarding this.

As part of the membership sign-up / renewal process, either direct through the ISAAC International website or one of our Chapters, members can choose to subscribe to our widely acclaimed [AAC journal](#), or one of our [other affiliated publications](#), Communication Matters or AGOSCI In Focus.

And finally, [please also consider a donation](#) to one of ISAAC International's existing fundraising campaigns, as part of any new or renewing membership. ISAAC issues donation tax receipts for all donations in excess of ten (\$10) dollars.

AAC Awareness Month — “Vibes of AAC” Virtual Event

We have had a very successful 2024 Awareness Month! The theme for AAC Awareness Month 2024 was “Vibes of AAC”, and our signature event for 2024, the “Vibes of AAC Virtual Event”, was a tremendous success.

With nearly 500 participants online from all over the world, attendees were able to access over 50 presentations, made by leading AAC voices from around the world.

In addition to the live presentations, all sessions were recorded, and those recorded sessions are still available for viewing. If you were not able to

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purchase a ticket for the live event, you can still [purchase a ticket](#) for access to all recorded sessions.

And for those registrants who are also ASHA members, ASHA CEUs can be claimed for viewing all recorded sessions. More information is available from the “My Account” page [of our event website](#), once you log into your account.

ISAAC, as an organization, also prides itself on employing available tools and technologies in a continuous effort of self-improvement, in order to better meet and achieve the mission and goals of the organization. And our “Vibes of AAC” online event was no exception!

ISAAC was able to employ a new, self-hosted and self-managed event website, in order to better support event registration for this event, and for future events. Combining this with our existing credit card transaction accounts, means that ISAAC is now able to ensure it minimizes expenditures on bank and other financial transaction service charges.

Also, for the first time, and in keeping with the directives of the ISAAC Council and Executive Board, ISAAC is now able to better manage conference related currency exchange fluctuations, by now charging event registrations

in US dollars. We anticipate that this change will have its greatest positive impact for our next in-person conference, when minimization of currency exchange fluctuations will assist in expenditure control.

Finally, ISAAC was able to deploy new technology to support AI generation of translated captions for our sessions, into seven languages. As with any new technology or process, there is a learning curve involved, with both the technology itself and with the manner in which that technology was implemented. In the end, the majority of recorded sessions do have translated captioning available, and we are taking the lessons learned from this first experience, to work towards improving our performance with this technology at our next opportunity.

New Executive Board (2024-26)

On behalf of ISAAC International, I invite all members around the world to join with me in welcoming our new 2024-26 ISAAC Executive Board. All of these individuals, representing our vibrant global community, are generously giving their time, energy, and effort, to further the mission and goals of ISAAC International:

Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli, President (Israel)
Neil Hansen, President-Elect (United Kingdom)
Catia Walter, Chair of the ISAAC Council (Brazil)

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Yoosun Chung, Chair-Elect of the ISAAC Council
(United States)

Usha Dalvi, Vice-President without Portfolio
(India)

Claudia Marimon Rigollet, Vice-President for
BUILD (Chile)

Lateef McLeod, Vice-President for LEAD (United
States)

Elena Radici, Vice-President without Portfolio
(Italy)

We wish our EB all the success in their governance
oversight responsibilities for the organization!

Ongoing ISAAC International Financial and Operational Management

ISAAC International is continuing its ongoing
management efforts, in order to position the
organization for realizing more successes in both
finances and operations. Part of these successes
have already been achieved, through this year's
"Vibes of AAC" event.

During 2025, we anticipate more work being done
to seek additional opportunities for revenue
generation. At the same time, we are also
committed, as an organization, to review ongoing
operations, and seek opportunities to rationalize
operational expenditures, and also seek

opportunities for bringing online new
processes and technologies that would, in the
long-term, lower the overall costs associated
with running the organization.

We will continue to keep the organization and
membership apprised on these efforts, as we
progress through 2025.

December 2024 Holiday Break

The ISAAC Executive Board recently released its
[2024 Season Greetings video](#), which we
encourage everyone to watch.

And as previously announced in our most recent
newsletter, the ISAAC International office will be
closed for the upcoming holiday break, beginning
at the close of business on December 20th, re-
opening again as at 9 am (Toronto time) on
January 6th, 2025. During this period, members of
the ISAAC staff team will not be available to
respond to email or telephone enquiries.

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

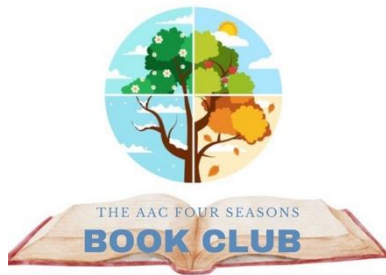
AAC Around the World



Editors Note:

"AAC Around the World" is a new, permanent section of the ISAAC Communicator, which now replaces the CSWN newsletter. ISAAC welcomes articles contributed for this section from around the world, that focus on AAC and assistive technology.

Turning Pages and Talking Books: The AAC Four Seasons Book Club by Chelsea Hagen



Hi, my name is Chelsea Hagen, and I am so excited to introduce you to something close to my heart: *The AAC Four Seasons Book Club!* If you love stories as much as I do, you will love this new club.

What is better than getting lost in a great book? Reading it with friends who totally get the joy—and sometimes the challenge—of reading. That's why my friends, Patrick Regan, Kevin Williams, Marcia Gemler, and I created *The AAC Four*

Seasons Book Club, a book club made by AAC communicators, for AAC communicators. Whether you're a page-turner, audiobook enthusiast, or someone who just loves hearing a good story, this club is for you.

Here is *The AAC Four Seasons Book Club* information.

The club is as easygoing as a lazy Sunday afternoon, and we're planning on featuring a book with each season. The neat thing about this club is Nobody is going to quiz you or check if you finished the book. Didn't get through it? No judgment here—come hang out anyway. Struggling to read but love a good story? Same here! That's why we're choosing books that can be enjoyed in multiple formats—physical books, audiobooks, and maybe even interpretive dance (okay, maybe not that last one).

Our first book is *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper, a story that is sure to spark some great conversation. To make it easy for everyone we will post questions about the book early, so you'll have plenty of time to ponder, reflect, or even whip up a witty response.

Who Can Join?

If you use AAC and love stories, you're in. It's that easy. All levels of reading and communicating are welcome. Whether you

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breeze through books or prefer to savor them slowly, this is your space to share thoughts, laughs, and connect with people.

Why I Started This Club

I've always loved stories. Sure, reading can sometimes turn my brain into a bit of a pin cushion, but that doesn't stop me from cozying up with a good book. Some I read; others I listen to. It's like a scrappy patchwork quilt, but it works. I know many AAC users face similar challenges with reading, and I wanted to create a space where we can enjoy stories together, without any pressure. Because let's face it: books are magical, but they're even better when shared. So, grab your favorite reading format and join the fun.

Ready to Join?

You can find more details about *The AAC Four Seasons Book Club* on the [ISAAC website](#) and Facebook. Got questions? Shoot us an email at AACBookClub@isaac-online.org—we're happy to help.

Together, we'll turn pages, share laughs, and maybe even learn a thing or two along the way. Don't miss out—this is the chapter you want to be part of!

Update from the ISAAC Research Committee

ISAAC's activities are supported by its members through standing committees and working groups that focus on specific responsibilities. One of these standing committees is the Research Committee (RC). The RC currently comprises ten members from around the world who meet monthly. Inherently, people who use AAC are active members of the RC. We have different occupational backgrounds, such as speech-language pathology, psychology, special education, assistive technology, pedagogy, and law. The RC is responsible for monitoring the development of research activities within ISAAC International. Activities include the (biennial) ISAAC Research Symposium, held in conjunction with the ISAAC Conference. The RC also considers strategies to encourage established and young researchers (e.g., students) to engage in state-of-the-art developments in the field. The RC reports to ISAAC's Executive Board (EB). The current chair is Kristine Stadskleiv, and she can be contacted (krisstad@uio.no) with queries about the work of the committee.

At the ISAAC Vibes of AAC Conference in October, the RC hosted a research

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symposium. According to our terms of reference, the RC is responsible for the promotion of research in all areas of AAC. We therefore decided to devote the symposium to topics and methodological issues that we found to be underrepresented in the current AAC research field. The two topics of the Research Symposium were: **(1) Mental health and mental health considerations for AAC users**, and **(2) Including AAC users as co-researchers**. These topics were introduced and discussed with international expert panels. In connection with this, we launched a short survey to gather input from respondents on the inclusion of mental health in their agendas, the availability and accessibility of mental health support for AAC users, and the resources currently used to identify and address mental health issues. Additionally, the survey aims to understand the current level of involvement of AAC users in research and gather ideas on how they can be meaningfully included in the research process as co-researchers, as well as identify future priorities for AAC research. **The survey is still open online and will remain so until January 10th. You can access and answer the survey, which takes approximately 5 minutes, at <https://nettskjema.no/a/464271>.**

Our current focus is on disseminating the results from the research symposium and the survey. To achieve this, we are planning two manuscripts based on the discussions during the symposium and the survey. One manuscript will discuss the issues of mental health and mental health problems among persons who use AAC and the other will focus on how to include people who use AAC in qualitative research and as co-researchers. Our goal is to have both manuscripts submitted during the first half of 2025.

News



Communication Matters



Communication Matters International AAC Conference 2024

The Communication Matters (CM) annual [International AAC Conference](#) took place at the University of Leeds from 8-10th September 2024.

A record 440 delegates which included 40 AAC users attended. It is great that nearly 10% of attendees were AAC users. CM were pleased to be able to subsidise 88 places this year for AAC users and their PAs and family members to attend. There was also a fantastic exhibition with 17 companies exhibiting. We are grateful for their support and sponsorship.



The feedback has been that the presentations were of a very high quality this year and they covered a fantastic range of topics. Thank you to all the presenters. Thank you also to our fantastic Keynote and Plenary speakers, Professor Annalu Waller ([left image](#)) and Helen Robinson ([right image](#)), for bookending the conference with such inspirational messages. We will be using the feedback to help start plan the [2025 Conference](#).

Following the work that CM Trustees Beth Moulam and Helen Hewson started at last year's Conference entitled "Our Futures", the Sunday afternoon activity at registration of CM2024 aimed to continue this work ([below](#)).



This activity was well received by delegates who took part enthusiastically. The activity gave each delegate an opportunity to tell the CM Trustees what they needed to empower AAC users to achieve their goals. It gave AAC users the chance to share what their priorities were in terms of achieving their goals. To allow those who were unable to attend the

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Conference to have their say, a [questionnaire](#) was made available to all those who follow CM on social media and all members and non-members who wished to have an input. All these answers have been collated and presented by Helen and Beth to the November Board meeting of the CM Trustees. This Board meeting tends to be where we discuss Strategy and make plans for the year ahead. So, watch this space for the feedback and the plans of how we can all work together to achieve these goals.

The next Communication Matters Annual International AAC Conference will be held at the University of Leeds from 7-9th September 2025. You are very welcome to join us in the UK! Registration will open in February/March 2025. We look forward to meeting you.

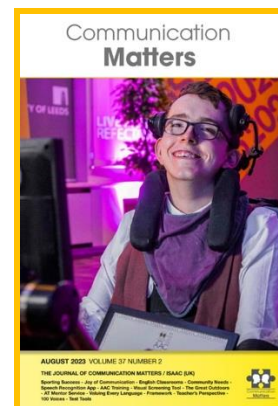
Further information can be found on our [website](#).

Communication Matters Journal

Why not subscribe to the Communication Matters Journal with your 2025 membership with ISAAC in the New Year?

The Communication Matters Journal offers a multidisciplinary perspective on AAC. It is

published three times a year in the UK, both in print and online. The Journal is a collection of articles by AAC users, parents and AAC practitioners - teachers, therapists, engineers, researchers and others - mostly from the UK. Each issue is usually around 40 pages, and typically has eight major articles. The articles are on a mixture of different topics, including both low and high-tech AAC, covering use by both children and adults. We actively welcome articles written by AAC users and their parents/families.



You can download some of the back issues of the CM Journal to see what kind of articles we publish [here](#). If you are interested in writing an article for the journal or advertising in the journal, please email admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

If you would like to subscribe to the journal, please contact ISAAC international or your ISAAC chapter.

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Receive Updates from Communication Matters!

WELCOME TO COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Communication Matters exists to support people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in their basic human right to communicate, be included and heard in an equitable society.

Follow us on:



Join our [AAC Forum](#) Google Group.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email

admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

AAC Journal

The last few months of 2024 have been productive and busy for *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*!

In September, the journal saw the release of Volume 40, Issue 3, which collected a new selection of research from the field. Articles published in this issue examine eye tracking technologies, AAC instruction for young children on the autism spectrum, AAC intervention and the Family of Participation-Related Constructs framework, teaching AAC strategies in South Africa, simultaneous visual and motor impairment,

and AAC users' experiences with mental health services.

In December, the journal celebrated the release of Volume 40, Issue 4, our final issue of 2024. This issue features research on AAC in the pediatric intensive care unit, AAC service providers in Canada, core vocabulary lists for AAC, speech generating devices, competency of speech language pathologists in AAC, representation of AAC in contemporary young adult fiction, and functional communication training. Alongside the articles, the issue also recognizes several achievements of excellence: the 2023 Editor's Awards for "Most Significant Research Paper" and "Most Significant Student Paper," the dedication of volunteer Associate Editors and Reviewers, and a final send-off for longtime Editorial Assistant Jackie Brown, who retired in June 2024 after 25 years of service.

The next issue of AAC will be released in March 2024, and articles continue to be published on a rolling basis online via Taylor & Francis. Thank you to the many contributors, Associate Editors, and Reviewers who continue to make AAC a success year after year. The Editorial Team wishes you a safe and happy holiday season, and we look forward to receiving new manuscripts in 2025.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication on Taylor & Francis:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/jaac20>.

Chapters



ISAAC-Australia • www.isaacaustralia.com

ISAAC-Brazil • www.isaacbrasil.org.br

ISAAC-Canada • www.isaac-canada.org

ISAAC-Denmark • www.isaac.dk

ISAAC-Español • *Coming soon* - www.isaac-espanol.org

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ISAAC-Sweden • www.isaac-sverige.se

ISAAC-Taiwan • twsaac.blogspot.com

ISAAC-UK • www.communicationmatters.org.uk

ISAAC-US • www.ussaac.org

PWUAAC Online Chats



Visit [PWUAAC Online Chats](#) on the ISAAC website for information about the next scheduled chat.

ISAAC Webinars

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](#).

Contact Us

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

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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