

## Message from the ISAAC President

Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli

**Dear ISAAC Family,**

In the last few days, we are starting to feel spring approaching in this part of the world. Spring shows us that from every little seed, with the help of water, sunlight, and attention, a flower or a fruit tree grows.

Also at ISAAC, we are starting to shake off the winter months and prepare for the next period. In the coming months, we will all work together vigorously on the strategic plan that will accompany ISAAC over the next four years.



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### **Strategic Plan 2026-2029**

In the strategic plan, we would like to address several important points:

#### **1. Understanding how ISAAC can be of help to the local chapters:**

These days we are busy writing ideas for discussions with Chapter Chairs, and in the coming months, we will initiate meetings to understand how to promote these issues.

#### **2. Collaborations with various organizations that focus on AAC around the world:**

These collaborations are essential for promoting better communication access for individuals who use AAC, sharing best practices, raising awareness, providing training support, advocating for policy changes at national levels, and offering resource developments, all through global networking.

#### **3. Expanding awareness of AAC in developing countries:**

We are increasing our efforts for expanding awareness of AAC in countries around the world without ISAAC chapters. For example, we have started helping build a group of AAC stakeholders in China.

### **ISAAC Conference**

I have received numerous personal inquiries from ISAAC members asking about our next in-person conference. ISAAC International remains committed to presenting an in-person conference in Italy, as previously announced.

Having said that, organizing and presenting an in-person conference represents a significant financial outlay for any organization, and ISAAC is no different in that regard. Currently, ISAAC needs to take into consideration the following economic realities:

1. The post-COVID global recession and high rates of inflation in many countries limits individuals' abilities for discretionary spending on travel.
2. The same inflationary factors have increased the costs of airfare, hotel, and food/beverage, further impacting discretionary spending.
3. The current trade tariffs situation, unclear now, will impact both United States and Canada's stock markets and currencies, which are the main currencies used by ISAAC.
4. The new administration in the United States has announced budget cuts at the

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## Message from the ISAAC President ...continued



National Institutes of Health (NIH), which could impact conference travel funding received by ISAAC stakeholder groups.

As a result of the above instability and uncertainty, ISAAC will continue to postpone its next in-person conference presentation.

**We do, however, look forward to presenting another virtual this year during AAC Awareness Month in October.**

In October 2024, our "Vibes of AAC" online event was a success, with nearly 500 participants from all over the world. Following this event, we are beginning to work towards building the next virtual ISAAC conference that will also take place at the end of the AAC Awareness Month in October 2025.

This issue of The ISAAC Communicator contains more information on this, and we will continue to share updates as we proceed into 2025.

ISAAC Chapters around the world continue to organize in-person conferences and events within their regions. I'm happy to promote the upcoming Communication Matters (ISAAC UK) in-person conference happening in September 2025:

A theme of 'Identity' has been set for this year's Communication Matters International AAC Conference, taking place 8th-9th of September in Leeds, England. This very current and broad topic hopes to open conversation and highlight work being done around how AAC users explore, connect with and share their identity. This could be within areas looking at, but not exclusive to, gender, culture and/or race, person-centered service delivery, self-advocacy, AI, technological advances, and neurodiversity. The Call for Papers is open until the 16th of April, and we encourage all to consider submitting an abstract to ensure a broad representation of perspective. For more information please visit:

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/conference>



[Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli](#)

ISAAC President

# From the Executive Director



## Franklin Smith

Welcome to the March 2025 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

Another spring has “sprung” here in the northern hemisphere, and this always represents a time of hope, renewal, and warmer temperatures! 2025 is shaping up to be both an exciting and challenging year for ISAAC International.

As for the challenges, two of the most significant ones (at the time of writing) are:

1. There is currently a tariff war in place between Canada and the United States, two neighbours who are each other’s largest trading partners, and who share the world’s longest non-militarized border. This will no doubt have a significant impact on the economies of both countries, including inflation, employment, stock market wealth, and currency exchange rates.

2. A new administration was elected in the United States last November, and that administration took office during January of this year. Already, the administration has taken action to cut funding in order to reduce budget deficits. Notably, we are aware of reports about possible funding cuts to the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), which could have significant impacts for the field of AAC, ISAAC, and our stakeholder groups, globally. Many in the field are naturally concerned about the impact this could have on people who use AAC, their families, practitioners, and researchers.

As a result, we here at ISAAC International are going to be especially focused during 2025 on ensuring that we deliver value to our members first and foremost, continue to have a positive impact on the field of AAC, and safeguard the well-being of our organization.

And here are a few examples of how we are going to follow through in doing this during the year...

### **ISAAC 2025 Virtual Event**

Following up on the tremendous success of last year’s virtual “Vibes of AAC” online event, ISAAC is now planning the presentation of a 2025 virtual event.

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## From the Executive Director ...continued



ISAAC was thrilled to launch, for last year's event, our new [online event/conference website](#). This website provides ISAAC with the flexibility to self-manage registration for our own paid events, thereby allowing us to be more efficient and effective as an organization. We will be using this same website once again to manage registration for this year's online event.

Although no formal dates have yet been set, we anticipate presenting our 2025 virtual event, once again, during AAC Awareness Month in October.

Also, and in keeping with the global nature of ISAAC, we are planning on involving our ISAAC Council, Research Committee, Chapters, and non-Chapter regions to ensure that we achieve as broad a range of submissions as possible for this event.

Keep watching the ISAAC website, social media channels, and monitor your email over the course of the coming few weeks, as we provide more information.

### **Strategic Plan, 2026-29**

The ISAAC Executive Board (EB) is focusing this year on the next iteration of our strategic plan,

to cover the four-year period of 2026 through 2029. ISAAC's [current strategic plan](#) is available for viewing from the ISAAC website, and the EB will, of course, need to present its new strategic plan to the ISAAC Council.

### **ISAAC Council Meeting, 2025**

ISAAC Council Meetings are, in accordance with our Governance Handbook, linked to the presentation of our Biennial in-person Conference.

Since there is no in-person conference planned during 2025 (see the comments from our President in this issue of The ISAAC Communicator about this), a Special Meeting of the ISAAC Council has been called for October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025, beginning at 11 am Eastern (Toronto) time, and Council members have been made aware of the date, time and connect details by way of electronic communication (email and website). The official notification of this meeting is [available to view here](#).

### **ISAAC Growth Opportunities**

ISAAC International is always looking for opportunities to expand the breadth and depth of our reach, as it relates to the field of AAC globally. To this end, we are involved in activities including:

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- Partnering with other similarly focused organizations for the purposes of revenue and membership growth
- Assisting groups around the world, particularly those in developing AAC countries, with creating connections to the global AAC community, as a means of generating additional growth in membership and publication subscriptions
- Working collaboratively with the Editors and Editorial Assistant of our AAC journal, we want to leverage our own in-house Communications team as a means of achieving overall growth of impact factor, revenue, and other journal key metrics

**ISAAC Membership, 2025**

As in previous years, members of ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-Español, USSAAC, and ISAAC International can make use of our [online membership portal](#) to renew an existing membership. The ISAAC office has already sent out multiple membership reminders during the October 2024 through January 2025 timeframe. We will do one final round of reminders prior to the end of March.

Specific membership renewal information for both returning members and those wishing to become new members, is available on the ISAAC website for each of the above as follows:

ISAAC-Australia.....[2025 Membership Portal](#)

ISAAC-Canada.....[2025 Membership Portal](#)

ISAAC-Español.....[Portal de membresía 2025](#)

ISAAC-US (USSAAC).....[2025 Membership Portal](#)

ISAAC International (English).....[2025 Membership Portal](#)

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

Regards and thanks,

Franklin Smith

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

## 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.*

## AAC Four Seasons Book Club Spins Into Action-Literally! by Chelsea Hagen



In what can only be described as the literary event of the season (or at least *a* season), the AAC Four Seasons Book Club held its first book club meeting, and folks, it was a hit. Readers using AAC devices gathered for a couple of afternoons of bookish banter, deep discussions, and just the right amount of chaos.

From the moment people started joining, it was clear that this was going to be an awesome book club. There were passionate opinions, strong reactions, and, of course, the ever-important question: "Was this book a good read?" Opinions were, some people loved the book, some...did not. But that is what a book club is all about agreeing, disagreeing, and pretending we all finished the book, haha.

To decide the next book, we didn't just take a vote. Oh no. We took it to the next level: a giant spin-the-wheel game featuring book suggestions from club members. With great anticipation (and maybe a little dramatic music playing in the background—let's pretend), the wheel landed on *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman. Cheers erupted. Okay, only small cheers because it was only Marcia and I that was present for the spin event.

With such a great first turnout and a conversation that kept going, I know one thing: this book club is here to stay. The next meeting is tentatively planned for May, giving everyone time to dive into Ove's world, laugh, cry, and argue about whether he's grumpy or just misunderstood.

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## AAC Around the World

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So, fellow book lovers, grab your physical book, audible book, or watch the movie, and then join us, The AAC Four Seasons Book Club, for the spring book club meeting.

I want to thank everyone who joined the last book club and to all my AAC crew that helped me pull off a great meeting. Whether you read the book, shared your thoughts, or just showed up for the fun vibes, I appreciate you all.

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### Mark Steidl Performs an opera using AAC



Image Credit: NUA Photography

**From the Opera Saratoga Press Release,  
September 23, 2024 —**

“In a uniquely beautiful collaboration, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Opera Saratoga, and the Bergamot Quartet join

forces to present a free workshop performance of THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE by librettists Mark Steidl and Katherine Skovira and composer Robert Whalen. THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE is a new opera for synthetic and acoustic voices written by and for people who use Alternative Assistive Communication...

The story draws direct inspiration from the life of Mark Steidl, a gender non-binary person who uses an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device to talk with the world....

THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE examines the intersection of art, advocacy, and technology in our lives, memories, and identities, and the role that art plays in promoting equity and agency of those who use alternative means of communication to speak to the world.” The opera was featured in the New York Times and other publications.

See the following links for more information:

- [ISAAC International](#)
- [New York Times](#)
- [Temple University](#)
- [Public Source](#)
- [New York Social Diary](#)
- [The Naked Dear](#)



## News



### Communication Matters



#### Communication Matters International AAC Conference 2025

8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> September, University of Leeds, England

The Communication Matters [International AAC Conference](#) is the UK's leading annual AAC event bringing together researchers, professionals, suppliers and AAC users, their families and carers for a diverse programme of keynotes, plenaries, presentations, posters and networking opportunities.

This year we are delighted to announce a few small changes and some new exciting new additions including:

- **Pre-Conference Relaxed Exhibition:** on the afternoon of 7<sup>th</sup> September, we will be providing a time for conference delegates and the community who need a quieter and less busy space to meet with suppliers.
- **AAC Awards:** on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> September, we will be hosting our biannual event celebrating all forms of communication, the people who use AAC, and the professionals, families and

- suppliers that support them. We are certain the awards, dinner and dancing will prove to be a fun and exciting night for all!
- **Post-Conference Research Study Day:** this additional day on 9<sup>th</sup> September is open to conference delegates and others who are interested in research focused strands delivered by an international cohort of researchers and academics.



#### Call for Papers

The **Call for Papers** is open until 16<sup>th</sup> April, and we welcome abstract submissions linked to the field of AAC and, where possible, bringing in the concept of our theme of 'Identity'. We encourage presentations from all in the AAC community including professionals, researchers and supporters, and particularly AAC users and family members.

Put your abstract forward for consideration to join leading academics, researchers, support

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staff, caregivers and users of AAC from across the world to shape the future of inclusive, accessible communication for all.

Our esteemed team of speakers will come together in Leeds to deliver a diverse programme of over 100 exciting and engaging sessions. As an accepted speaker, you can:

- Expand your network: Meet AAC experts and users from across the world
- Drive AAC innovation: Share your research on a global platform
- Gain recognition: Showcase your work within the AAC community
- Transform lives: Be part of the drive to advance access to communication for all

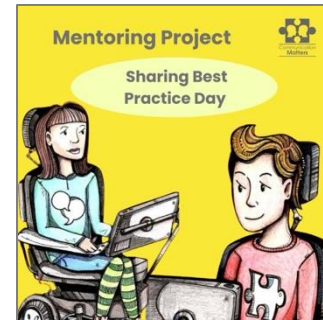
Submit your abstract before **16<sup>th</sup> April 2025** and help our AAC community to give every adult and child a voice. You will be updated on the status of your submission via email by 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

### Find out more:

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/conference/callforpapers/>

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the opportunity, please email [admin@communicationmatters.org.uk](mailto:admin@communicationmatters.org.uk).

## Peer Support Sharing Best Practice Day



Communication Matters are pleased to invite AAC users (mentors and those interested in mentoring/peer support), PAs, parents and others to our Peer Mentoring and Support Project, Sharing Best Practice Day on **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025**, at 9.30am-3.15pm, at the University of Leeds.

The aim of the day is to share best practice with a focus on peer support and mentoring and to bring everyone together who has been involved in the project so far, including AAC mentors and those providing Communication Clubs, as well as anyone who would like to come along to find out more.

We are grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund England for providing the funding for this project and this event. The event is free to anyone who would like to attend (lunch and refreshments will be provided), but you will need to please register your place in advance. We have funding for

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travel and accommodation (if required) for AAC users too.

If you are unable to attend in person, we are also able to offer remote access to the morning presentations via Zoom.

Please visit our website to download the draft programme for the day and register for this event. Please note that numbers are limited, and places are offered on a first-come-first-served basis. The closing date for booking your place is Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

### Find out more:

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/mentoring-projects-2024/>

If you have any questions, please email [admin@communicationmatters.org.uk](mailto:admin@communicationmatters.org.uk).

### 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](mailto:admin@communicationmatters.org.uk).



## ISAAC-Español



### ISAAC Español: Fortaleciendo la CAA en el Mundo Hispanohablante

En ISAAC Español, estamos desarrollando diversas iniciativas para fortalecer la comunidad de Comunicación Aumentativa y Alternativa (CAA) en el mundo hispanohablante y fomentar la participación activa en nuestro capítulo.

Para lograrlo, estamos enfocando nuestros esfuerzos en varias áreas clave:

- **Creación de espacios de formación y aprendizaje:** Organizamos webinars, talleres y encuentros donde especialistas, familias y personas usuarias de CAA pueden compartir conocimientos y experiencias.
- **Generación de redes y comunidad:** Fomentamos la interacción entre miembros a través de foros, eventos y actividades colaborativas, promoviendo el intercambio de información y apoyo mutuo.

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- **Difusión de recursos y buenas prácticas:** Compartimos materiales, guías y estrategias basadas en evidencia para potenciar el uso efectivo de la CAA en distintos entornos.
- **Promoción de la inclusión y visibilización de la CAA:** Participamos en campañas, conferencias y eventos internacionales para sensibilizar sobre la importancia del acceso a la comunicación para todas las personas.
- **Fortalecimiento del capítulo y crecimiento de membresía:** Implementamos estrategias para que más personas y profesionales se sumen a ISAAC Español, asegurando una comunidad más amplia y activa.

A través de estas acciones, buscamos consolidar un espacio donde la CAA sea reconocida, promovida y utilizada como una herramienta clave en la inclusión y la participación para todos.

En ISAAC Español, queremos lograr una representación más inclusiva dentro del capítulo. Como parte de este compromiso, hemos incorporado a dos usuarios de Comunicación Aumentativa y Alternativa (CAA) a nuestra mesa directiva, asegurando que sus voces y experiencias sean parte fundamental

en la toma de decisiones y en el desarrollo de nuestras iniciativas.

Bienvenidos Iván Davidovich, Argentina y Robinson Díaz, Chile.

Claudia Marimón Rigollet (Chile)  
**Presidente ISAAC español**

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### ISAAC Español: Strengthening AAC in the Spanish-Speaking World

In **ISAAC Español**, we are developing various initiatives to strengthen the **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) community** in the Spanish-speaking world and encourage active participation in our chapter.

To achieve this, we are focusing our efforts on several key areas:

- **Creating spaces for learning and training:** We organize webinars, workshops, and meetings where specialists, families, and AAC users can share knowledge and experiences.
- **Building networks and community:** We foster interaction among members through forums, events, and collaborative activities, promoting information exchange and mutual support.

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- **Sharing resources and best practices:** We provide materials, guides, and evidence-based strategies to enhance the effective use of AAC in different settings.
- **Promoting inclusion and raising awareness of AAC:** We participate in campaigns, conferences, and international events to highlight the importance of communication access for everyone.
- **Strengthening the chapter and growing our membership:** We implement strategies to encourage more individuals and professionals to join **ISAAC Español**, ensuring a broader and more engaged community.

Through these actions, we aim to create a space where **AAC is recognized, promoted, and used as a key tool for inclusion and participation for all.**

At **ISAAC Español**, we are committed to achieving a **more inclusive representation within our chapter**. As part of this commitment, we have **incorporated two AAC users into our board of directors**, ensuring

that their voices and experiences play a fundamental role in decision-making and the development of our initiatives.

**Welcome Iván Davidovich from Argentina and Robinson Díaz from Chile!**

Claudia Marimón Rigollet (Chile)  
**President ISAAC español**

## Chapters



- ISAAC-Australia • [www.isaacaustralia.com](http://www.isaacaustralia.com)
- ISAAC-Brazil • [www.isaacbrasil.org.br](http://www.isaacbrasil.org.br)
- ISAAC-Canada • [www.isaac-canada.org](http://www.isaac-canada.org)
- ISAAC-Denmark • [www.isaac.dk](http://www.isaac.dk)
- ISAAC-Español • *Coming soon* - [www.isaac-espanol.org](http://www.isaac-espanol.org)
- ISAAC-Francophone • [www.isaac-fr.org](http://www.isaac-fr.org)
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## 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](mailto: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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## The ISAAC Communicator

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Comments welcome! Please  
contact [Chloe Leon](#), ISAAC's  
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