

Message from the ISAAC President

Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli

Dear ISAAC Family,

"Innovation, Inclusion, and Advocacy in AAC": this is the theme for ISAAC's Virtual Event 2025. I love this theme that was chosen this year by the Research Committee.

It's a powerful trio of themes, each one vital to the future of AAC.

1. Innovation in AAC- is needed to create new intuitive and sustainable solutions that meet diverse communication needs. The most impactful innovations come from collaboration with AAC users themselves, ensuring the tech reflects real-world needs and lived experiences.



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2. Inclusion in AAC- means more than just providing tools—it's about ensuring AAC users are fully integrated into education, employment, healthcare, and social life. Events like the ISAAC Virtual Conference bring voices from around the world together to share inclusive practices and foster community.

3. Advocacy in AAC- from self-advocacy, through policy and funding to community leadership, organizations like ISAAC elevate the voices of people with disabilities, ensuring they lead the conversation.

Together, these pillars form a movement—not just a field of study. They aim to reshape how society understands communication, ability, and empowerment. If you're thinking about how to contribute to this space, whether through research, education, or design, there's a lot of exciting ground to cover.

So, be sure to join us for ISAAC's Virtual Event 2025. The conference will focus on advancing the field of AAC by exploring cutting-edge research, technology advancements, and inclusive practices.

As I reported in my message in the June Communicator, we are diligently working on collaborations with other organizations with

whom we share common goals, aiming to amplify the topic of AAC across diverse audiences worldwide.

For example, the collaboration with IALP, signed over the past year, resulted in a dedicated session at the organization's conference. This session featured Elena Radici, an ISAAC Executive Board Member and ISAAC-Italy member (pictured below), who shared ISAAC's organizational vision with the conference attendees.



Credit: Sally Clendon

A similar collaboration agreement is expected to be signed in the coming days with ESLA, the European Speech and Language Therapy Association, with the aim of exploring joint initiatives between the two organizations.

In addition, our Executive Board members have drafted the organization's Strategic Plan for the next four years. I look forward to sharing the details with you, after we submit the Strategic Plan to the Council's approval.

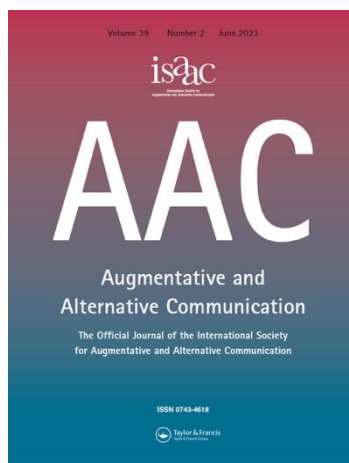
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I am pleased to share with you news about a special issue of the *Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)* journal, on the power of collaboration - an historic issue where every paper is authored or co-authored by someone who uses AAC. This issue includes manuscripts based on papers presented at the Summit on the Future of AAC Research held in Arlington, Virginia from May 13–14, 2024. Visit ISAAC's new [AAC website](#) to learn more. Under AAC Special Issues, you'll find "AAC Research: The Power of Collaboration," with 20 papers as well as an introduction by guest editors, Drs. Janice Light and David McNaughton, and an editorial by the co-editors of AAC, Drs. MaryAnn Ronski and Rose Sevcik.

Today's research must include diverse perspectives, especially those with lived experience. Projects shaped by AAC users, families, and professionals offer deeper insight into key AAC issues. This approach is reflected in the joint efforts of RERC on AAC and CommunicationFIRST, who co-organized the Summit on the Future of



AAC. The guest editors, Drs. Janice Light and David McNaughton, were intimately involved in all aspects of the issue, including being authors on a number of the submitted manuscripts.

We've had a few recent changes to our Executive Board, based on recommendations from the Nomination Committee and approved by the EB.

Neil Hansen is stepping down as President-Elect due to health reasons. We're incredibly grateful for his service and wish him full recovery. Uli Ehlert (Germany) will be stepping into Neil's role as President-Elect.

Lateef McLeod has also stepped down for personal reasons. We thank him for all he's contributed and wish him the very best. Esther Klang (US) will be taking over as Vice-President for LEAD.

Uli and Esther have officially joined the EB on September 1, 2025, and will complete Neil's and Lateef's terms as outlined in our by-laws.

Thanks for your support as we welcome Uli and Esther to the team!

I cannot end without thanking all the volunteers that make ISAAC possible, thank you all!

[Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli](#)
ISAAC President

From the Executive Director



Franklin Smith

Welcome to the September 2025 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

ISAAC Membership 2025

ISAAC International has seen one of its best membership cycles, in many years! Congratulations to our Chapters, Council Members, and volunteers around the world promoting the benefits of an ISAAC membership.

As of September 19th, total membership is now at over 2,160, representing a nearly 14% growth over this same time last year!

Based on our own internal data and feedback from members, there are a few reasons that explain this exceptionally good membership performance, including:

1. ISAAC's very well received October 2024 presentation of "Vibes of AAC," our all-online event;
2. Our upcoming October 2025 presentation of our next all-online event "Innovation, Inclusion, and Advocacy in AAC";

3. Continued positive performance of our scientific journal, AAC;
4. Securing membership benefits, including discounted member pricing for subscribing to AAC and affiliated publications, as well as attending next month's virtual event; and,
5. Interest in the formation of new ISAAC Chapters in Africa, Asia, and southern Europe continue to help drive new membership.

During the final quarter of 2025 (October through December), ISAAC will be working on membership renewals for 2026. As in previous years, members through our ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-Español, and USSAAC (ISAAC-US) chapters, in addition to our "International Members," will receive membership renewal notification emails directly from ISAAC International. New member sign-ups and renewals for these members can be completed directly from the [ISAAC website](#).

If you are an ISAAC member (or interested in becoming a member) through any of our other Chapters, you can renew directly with your Chapter. A list of our Chapters is available from the [ISAAC website](#).

We look forward, as an organization, to continue our mission during 2026 in promoting AAC for all its stakeholders!

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AAC Awareness Month 2025 and “Innovation, Inclusion, and Advocacy in AAC”

In response to numerous requests, ISAAC will be extending the Early Bird registration period, through to the end of October 15, 2025. In order to secure the lowest possible registration prices, you will need to register for this exciting event by this date.

“Innovation, Inclusion, and Advocacy in AAC” is the theme for this year’s AAC Awareness Month, and ISAAC is thrilled to be presenting an all-virtual event this October, to coincide with AAC Awareness Month. With online presentations scheduled for October 28th and October 29th, 2025, this event is shaping up to be both informative and exciting!

We are thrilled to announce that, so far, hundreds have registered. Registrations include access to the live presentation of all events AND the recordings of all sessions. For more information, and to register, simply connect to our event [registration site](#). We have also published a [registration FAQ](#), should more information on registering be required.

Information on presenters and online registration is available directly from the [ISAAC Event website](#). ISAAC members receive special

discounts, so make sure to purchase your registration now, during our NOW EXTENDED Early Bird sale!

Special Meeting of the ISAAC Council

On October 23rd, the ISAAC Council will be holding a [Special Meeting](#), as called by ISAAC President Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli and Chair of the ISAAC Council Catia Walter.

At that meeting, a number of ISAAC governance items will be discussed, including a presentation of the new 2026-2029 Strategic Plan, as well as a 2026-2027 budget presentation.

The ISAAC Executive Board is pleased to work collaboratively with the ISAAC Council, in its shared governance responsibilities on behalf of the organization and our stakeholders. 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

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.

Reflections on Rwanda: A Journey of Ubumuntu and the Promise of AAC by Juan Bornman

How many emotions and experiences can one gather during a short three-day trip? Rwanda – the country of a thousand hills – is unlike any place I have ever visited. Kigali, the capital, proudly boasts of being the cleanest city in Africa. Eco-tourism thrives, and the gorilla conservation project has boosted both tourism and the local economy. But for me, Rwanda is far more than its gorillas, its lush green mountains, its world-class Arabica coffee (the best I have ever tasted), its famous tea (praised by tea lovers, though I didn't try it myself), or its abundance of tropical fruit—more than five types of bananas alone! For me, Rwanda is about its people.



Kigali on the move — the ever-present 'motos' weaving through the city's thousand hills. More than just transport, they're a symbol of Rwanda's energy, connection, and constant forward motion.



Kigali shines — a vibrant, modern city that never loses its warmth.

We all know the history of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, in which around one million people were brutally killed in just 100 days. But Rwanda's story does not end in tragedy. It is also about reconciliation, about reclaiming humanity, and about living out *Ubumuntu*—a word that captures humanity, goodness, generosity, and kindness. It is visible everywhere as Rwandans proudly affirm: "*We are all Rwandan. We are one.*" This message transcends borders, reminding us that we too can be champions of humanity by standing against division, wherever we live.

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At the Genocide Memorial in Kigali: Kwibuka — ‘to remember.’ A place of reflection, healing, and renewed commitment to unity.



*Rwanda's Roses:
Symbols of Love and
Memory.*



*At the memorial, a fountain
flows—reminding us that just
as water is inseparable, so too
are the people of Rwanda,
united forever.*

I was invited to Rwanda by René Ngabo, founder and president of RATA (*Rwandan Assistive Technology Access*), and was fortunate to travel with a colleague and former PhD student, Dr Vuledzani Ndangageni. RATA has already done extraordinary work in the field of assistive technology and visual impairment, and is now venturing into AAC. The potential for collaboration is inspiring—especially with their current project training youth with visual impairments.



Where it all began: RATA, with René Ngabo and Dr Vuledzani Ndangageni, guiding the first steps toward a brighter future in AAC.

I am deeply grateful to Edit Micro and Tobii Dynavox for donating brand-new AAC technology to RATA. Strengthening ties between such partners holds the promise of transforming health and education outcomes for people with disabilities in Rwanda, ultimately improving their opportunities for employment and inclusion.



A milestone for RATA: the first AAC devices, made possible by the generosity of Edit Micro and Tobii Dynavox, unlocking voices and possibilities – bringing hope, connection, and a new world of communication to those Rwandans who need it most."

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AAC Around the World ... continued

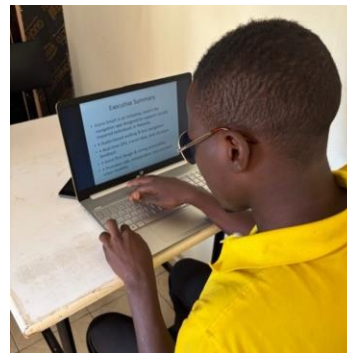


Before arriving, we met online with Prof David Tumusiime from CEBE, whose *Triple Helix* approach—linking government, academia, and the private sector—offers a cost-effective, capacity-building model with great potential for AAC. Once in Rwanda, we had the honor of meeting colleagues from the University of Rwanda, College of Medicine and Health Sciences: Dr Jean Baptiste Sagahutu (Dean: School of Health Sciences), Dr Eric Niyikiza (Advisor to the Principal), and Dr Farayi Kaseke (HoD, Physiotherapy). Together, we explored how to strengthen speech-language and hearing therapy training and services. A new four-year degree program is on the horizon—an exciting milestone for inclusive health and education systems.

We also met with Dr Menelas Nkeshimana, Head of Health Workforce Development at the Ministry of Health, who generously shared time to discuss supporting Rwanda's National Strategic Plan through training, awareness, and capacity-building in communication disability and AAC.

A visit to HVP Gatagara Rwamagana, hosted by Br Jean Damascène Barindira, was deeply moving. The school educates more than 160 learners with visual impairments, many of whom continue on to university. Their achievements reflect Rwanda's remarkable progress and resilience.

Finally, we travelled to the University of Rwanda's College of Education at Rukara Campus, where we met with Dr Patric Suubi. His passion for inclusive education is contagious. Together we envisioned practical collaborations: an accredited AAC short course, shared research supervision, webinars, and cross-country initiatives. Rwanda's education sector is in capable hands, led with vision, dedication, and a clear sense of purpose.



Learning without limits: a young man with a visual impairment hones his coding skills at RATA, proving that technology can open doors for all.

This was a short but profoundly impactful visit, and I believe the best is still to come. My heart returns again to *Ubumuntu*. May we, as ISAAC members, also embody it—living out humanity, generosity, and kindness. For we too can be champions of humanity by standing against division, no matter where we live.

Murakoze, Rwanda — thank you for your generosity, resilience, and the inspiring spirit of *Ubumuntu* that flows through every hill, every smile, and every effort to make communication and inclusion possible for all.

News

Centro Benedetta D'Intino



ISAAC President Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli visited the Centro Benedetta D'Intino in Milan. This heartwarming and eye-opening experience reminded how, all around the world, we can make a real difference for children with AAC needs and their families.



Dr. Aurelia Rivaola (right) and Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli (right)



The Centro Benedetta D'Intino Onlus is a highly respected Milanese center offering AAC care and support to children with communication and psychological difficulties, and their families, while promoting research, training, and the culture of inclusion.



*Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli (left) and
ISAAC Executive Board Member Elena Radici (right)*

ISAAC-Brazil



Claudia Marimón and Catia Walter (above), members of the Executive Board of ISAAC International, took part in the 10th ISAAC Brazil Conference, a gathering that brought together professionals, researchers, families, and AAC users in a space for exchange and learning. The conference also carried special

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significance, as it marked the 20th anniversary of the founding of ISAAC Brazil, highlighting its trajectory and commitment to promoting Augmentative and Alternative Communication in the region. The conference honored Professor Dra. Leila Regina d'Oliveira de Paula Nunes, a pivotal figure in the history and early development of AAC and ISAAC Brazil, acknowledging her enduring legacy and significant contribution to the advancement of the AAC field

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Catia Walter y Claudia Marimón, miembros del Executive Board de ISAAC Internacional, participaron en el 10º Congreso de ISAAC Brasil, un encuentro que reunió a profesionales, investigadores, familias y usuarios de CAA en un espacio de intercambio y aprendizaje. El congreso tuvo además un significado especial, ya que se celebraron los 20 años de la creación de ISAAC Brasil, destacando su trayectoria y compromiso en la promoción de la Comunicación Aumentativa y Alternativa en la región. La conferencia rindió homenaje a la Profesora Dra. Leila Regina d'Oliveira de Paula Nunes, una figura fundamental en la historia e inicios de la CAA y de ISAAC Brasil, reconociendo su legado perdurable y su significativa contribución al avance en el campo de la CAA.



Chapters



ISAAC-Australia • www.isaacaustralia.com

ISAAC-Brazil • www.isaacbrasil.org.br

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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

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.

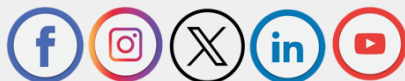
ISAAC is a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic & Social Council.

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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