

THE ISAAC COMMUNICATOR

September 2026

Message from the ISAAC President

Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli

Dear ISAAC Family,

This is my last "Message from the President" for the ISAAC Communicator, and I confess I did not quite know how to begin it — so I did what I imagine many of you do when a chapter in life is closing: I went back and reread. I opened two years of Communicator issues, from March 2024 to this one, and followed our story page by page.

I found myself lingering longest over September 2024 — the issue in which my predecessor, Tracy Shepherd, wrote her own farewell. Tracy wrote about dance: about a term in which, as she put it, "when we spin one way, the music takes us another." She closed with Martha Graham's words, that dance is "the hidden language of the soul of the body," and told us she would be cheering from the audience while the rest of us kept dancing.



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I have carried that image with me for two years. ISAAC's story is a dance — sometimes graceful, sometimes improvised, always danced together even when the music changes without warning. Today it is my turn to pass the rhythm on, and I find I understand Tracy's words even better now than when I first read them.



ISAAC Presidents from left to right: Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli, Tracy Shepherd, Juan Bornman, and Meredith Allan

Together with our Executive Board, we completed ISAAC's Strategic Plan for 2026–2029, built around five pillars — AAC Awareness, Connection, Leadership, Research, and Organizational Capacity — that will guide our organization long after my term ends. We welcomed a new chapter, ISAAC–South Korea, into our global family, and we are in the midst of building a new Chapter in Ukraine, as well as having discussions surrounding other new opportunities for Chapter development in Europe: proof that

the need for AAC, and the wish to organize around it, keeps growing in every corner of the world. Two major gatherings lie just ahead of us: the [ISAAC International Forum](#) in October in Zagreb, Croatia and the [ISAAC Virtual Conference](#) in November. And after a long and careful process, we are close to launching a new ISAAC website, one built to open far more collaboration between our chapters, to give access to the immense knowledge that already exists across ISAAC International and within our chapters, and to become a true platform for partnership. Our mentoring program, which I reported on at last year's meeting, keeps growing too — it remains especially active in South America, China, and the Philippines, and has now begun collaborations with initiatives in Africa as well.

As I hand over the presidency, I want to be honest about what lies ahead. An especially challenging period stands before us — for all of us in the world and specifically for ISAAC — because of how quickly artificial intelligence tools are entering our lives and our field.

AAC and Artificial Intelligence

AAC and AI both bring hope and concern. AI enables extremely fast, low-cost development, which has led to an explosion of new AAC apps, extensions, and page sets. This creates opportunities for communities

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long-awaited: different languages, aphasia, bilingual users, culturally adapted symbols — all stakeholders can now build their own tools.

But challenges are growing. Choosing between hundreds of tools is overwhelming and traditional comparison methods no longer work. A tool can look excellent yet be a poor fit, leading to abandonment.

Many developers also lack a sustainable business model. AAC is a tiny market, funding systems are complex, and when updates stop, someone loses their voice. Building AAC is easier; supporting AAC is harder.

Technology is racing forward. Our job is to make sure it moves in a direction that truly serves the people who rely on AAC.

This is exactly why we chose to give AAC and AI real space at both of our upcoming events: the topic will be discussed in depth at the [ISAAC International Forum in October](#) and again at our [Virtual Conference in November](#). I warmly invite every ISAAC member to register for one, or for both — this is a conversation our whole community needs to be part of.

What we have built over these past two years is the work of an Executive Board that gave ISAAC its time, its judgment and, often, its evenings and weekends. I want to thank each of them, by name:

- **Uli Ehlert**, *President-Elect* — for twenty-five years of leadership in assistive technology and AAC, and for the dedication to inclusion he now carries into ISAAC's presidency.
- **Claudia Marimon-Rigollet**, *Vice-President of BUILD* — for three decades of commitment to ISAAC since 1992, and for the work she leads training the next generation of AAC professionals in Chile and across ISAAC Español.
- **Lateef McLeod**, *Vice-President of LEAD* — for bringing his voice as a writer, scholar and self-advocate to ISAAC's leadership, even while he was completing his doctorate.
- **Catia Walter**, *Chair-Elect of the Council* — for a decade building ISAAC-Brazil from the ground up, and for the research and mentorship she gives so generously to the AAC field.
- **Yoosun Chung**, *Chair-Elect of Council* — for her leadership at George Mason University and her years steering USSAAC, now brought to ISAAC International.

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- **Usha Dalvi**, *Vice-President without Portfolio* — for more than twenty-five years of service to ISAAC since her Teacher-in-Residence year in 1998, and for helping found ISAAC-India in 2007.
- **Elena Radici**, *Vice-President without Portfolio* — for her steady presence on the Board since 2013, and for the AAC work she continues in Milan.
- **Kristine Stadskliev**, *Chair of the Research Committee* — for keeping ISAAC's research agenda strong and connected to practice.

I also want to pause and thank two colleagues who served on this Board during these two years and, for reasons of their own, had to step down before their terms were complete: **Neil Hansen and Esther Klang**. Thank you both for the time and expertise you gave to ISAAC while you were with us — it was felt, and it mattered.

It is with real confidence that I hand the presidency to Uli Ehlert. I have seen his commitment to this community for many years, and I know ISAAC is in good hands. And to everyone who will join our Executive Board and Council in the years ahead: welcome.

ISAAC is fortunate to have you, and I hope you find, as I did, that the dance is worth every step.



Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli and Uli Ehlert

Finally, my thanks go to all of you: to ISAAC members around the world, who are the reason this organization exists at all; to every chapter volunteer who gives evenings and weekends to this work; to our Executive Board and Council; and to the small, tireless staff in the ISAAC office, whose work behind the scenes makes everything above possible led by ISAAC's Executive Director, Franklin Smith - my sincerest gratitude to your outstanding commitment to the field of AAC and this wonderful organization. It has been the honor of my professional life to work with all of you and serve as your President these past two years.

With gratitude and warmth,

[Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli](#)

President, ISAAC International, 2024–2026

From the Executive Director



Franklin Smith

Welcome to the June 2026 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

2026 Special Meeting of the ISAAC Council

On September 14th, 2026, the ISAAC Council met to hold its 2026 Special Meeting. The Council heard reports from the [Regional Coordinators](#) and individual Chapters on current activities taking place in our various global Chapters and regions.

The central agenda item for this meeting was dedicated to the ISAAC Executive Board (EB) – recognizing the current 2024-26 EB members for their tremendous efforts, and asking the ISAAC Council to approve the proposed slate for the 2026-28 EB.

In her final message to the membership as ISAAC President, Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli provided her tremendous thanks to the current 2024-26 ISAAC EB, and there is little

I can add to that tribute, other than to add that from my perspective, it was a privilege working with all of you.

And that then takes us to the....

ISAAC Executive Board, 2026-28

The ISAAC Council unanimously approved the proposed slate for the ISAAC EB, and the following EB positions are now confirmed:

- President: Uli Ehlert (Germany)
- President-Elect: David Banes (United Kingdom)
- Chair of the ISAAC Council: Yoosun Chung (United States)
- Chair-Elect of the ISAAC Council: Michelle Phillippy (United States)
- Vice-President, LEAD¹: Grant Blasko (United States)
- Vice-President, BUILD²: Claudia Marimón Rigollet (Chile)
- Vice-President without Portfolio: Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli (Israel)
- Vice-President without Portfolio: Stéphane Jullien (Switzerland)

¹ Official By-Law position title: Vice-President Leadership Chair for People Who Use AAC

² Official By-Law position title: Vice-President without Portfolio, Chair of BUILD

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I know all ISAAC membership will join me in welcoming the new ISAAC EB, and as an organization, we thank them for their commitment to ISAAC and the field of AAC.

ISAAC Membership 2026

I am thrilled to announce another very positive membership year for all of ISAAC International. With now over 2,000 members worldwide, representing 55 countries, ISAAC can celebrate another very successful membership year. We appreciate each and every member who has renewed their membership for 2026.

October 2026 — AAC Awareness and Membership

Each year, October is always a very busy month. First and foremost, October is International Awareness Month for AAC. We look forward to sharing the various activities and stories that our stakeholders around the world will be engaging in, all for one purpose — to promote and raise awareness about AAC! Please watch for our announcements on the ISAAC websites, eblasts, and social media.

To our Chapters and Regional Coordinators, please make sure to share the various activities and stories taking place in your countries.

Please make sure to get in touch directly with our Manager of Communications, [Cheryl Jackson](#), to share your information and materials.

October is also the month where ISAAC prepares for the new membership year. For 2027, in addition to managing membership on behalf of ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-Español, and ISAAC-US (USSAAC), ISAAC will now be managing membership on behalf of our newest Chapter, ISAAC-South Korea. We welcome our friends from the Republic of South Korea to the global ISAAC family. All of these Chapter members from 2026 will automatically receive Chapter renewal notifications for 2027.

Non-Chapter affiliated members of ISAAC International will also continue to receive email membership renewal packages for 2027. ISAAC is also thrilled to remind everyone about our two AAC Awareness Month linked events: **the ISAAC Forum @ ATAAC 2026 and our ISAAC Virtual Conference 2026:**

[ISAAC Forum @ ATAAC 2026](#)

ISAAC International is thrilled to partner with ATAAC 2026, in presenting our first-ever ISAAC Forum two-day pre-conference workshops on October 19th and 20th, 2026 in Zagreb, Croatia, in advance of the ATAAC 2026 conference.

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The new ISAAC Forum initiative was developed in clear recognition of the desire by many in our global stakeholder community for in-person engagement at an ISAAC conference-style event.

[Registration tickets](#) are still available for purchase, from our dedicated ISAAC Forum website. ISAAC is offering for sale tickets for either the ISAAC Forum only, as well as a COMBINED ticket for both the ISAAC Forum and ATAAC 2026, the latter in conjunction with our friends at [ATAAC](#).

In addition to purchasing tickets for these exciting in-person events, the [schedule of sessions](#) and [speakers](#) for the ISAAC Forum @ ATAAC 2026 is also available from our website.

[Discounted hotel rates](#) are available for Forum attendees at the Zonar Zagreb hotel from October 18-23, 2026. To book your accommodation at the promotional rate, enter **ISAAC26** in the promotional code field when booking.

We look forward to welcoming the world to Zagreb, Croatia at the Zonar Zagreb hotel, this October.

ISAAC Virtual Conference 2026 — “AAC in Everyday Life: Today, Tomorrow, and Beyond”

Building upon the successes of the 2024 and 2025 virtual conferences, ISAAC is presenting its fully online Virtual Conference 2026 this year, taking place on November 10 and 11, 2026.

Our [Call for Papers](#) has closed, and we are thrilled that over 70 paper proposals have been accepted and are now being scheduled. We have advised all accepted authors, and we will be following up with them during October with further details.

[Registration tickets](#) are now available for purchase, at the Early Bird discounted rate (until October 31st, 2026), from our dedicated ISAAC Virtual Conference 2026 website.

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



United Nations General Assembly Adopts Historic Resolution on “Access to Assistive Technology” – September 2, 2026

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted a historic resolution on “Access to Assistive Technology” which affirms the global need for inclusion, access and opportunity for all.

The resolution, presented by Pakistan and sponsored by 40 Member States, confirms that access to assistive technology is a fundamental right and component of sustainable economic and social development.

“As President of ISAAC International, I welcome this resolution with pride and with hope. Since 2006, ISAAC has held Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and for two decades we have used that seat to advocate, at the highest international level, for the more than a billion people worldwide who have no or limited functional speech. This resolution matters because it moves communication access from principle to practice — embedding assistive technology, including communication devices,

directly into national health, education and social protection systems. For our community in particular, seeing communication devices named alongside wheelchairs, hearing aids and prosthetics is recognition long overdue: that the right to communicate is not optional, but foundational to dignity, education, health and full participation in society. ISAAC will continue to bring the voice of AAC users and professionals to the UN, to make sure this resolution is not only adopted, but implemented,” said Yonit Hagoel-Karnieli, President, ISAAC International.

Key details of the resolution:

- It addresses the needs of the 2.5 billion people globally who require assistive products like wheelchairs, hearing aids, prosthetics, and communication devices.
- It calls for embedding assistive technology into Universal Health Coverage (UHC), primary healthcare, and national systems spanning education, labour, and social protection.
- It encourages governments to establish national priority assistive product lists, boost local manufacturing and sustainable supply chains, and train specialized personnel.
- It emphasizes user involvement, disability rights organizations, and the integration

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- of assistive technology into humanitarian crisis preparedness.

The September 2026 UN resolution on Access to Assistive Technology is a critical implementation mechanism for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), turning the Convention's legal obligations into actionable national strategies. While the CRPD establishes the legal framework, the new resolution provides the practical blueprint for governments to deliver on those promises.

The 2026 resolution directly reinforces several core articles of the CRPD:

- **Article 4 (General Obligations):** The CRPD requires states to undertake the development, availability, and use of new technologies. The 2026 resolution builds on this by urging countries to create national priority assistive product lists and invest in local manufacturing.
- **Article 20 (Personal Mobility):** The CRPD mandates that states ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence. The 2026 resolution operationalizes this by calling for assistive technology to be embedded directly into Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and primary healthcare systems.

- **Article 26 (Habilitation and Rehabilitation):** The CRPD requires states to organize comprehensive rehabilitation services. The 2026 resolution addresses the current shortage of services by emphasizing the need to train specialized personnel and healthcare workers.
- **Articles 9, 21, and 24 (Accessibility, Expression, and Education):** By improving access to communication devices, screen readers, and hearing aids, the 2026 resolution provides the tools necessary to fulfill the CRPD's mandates for inclusive education and equal access to information.

The 2026 resolution solidifies the CRPD's core mission: shifting the global approach to disability away from a medical or charity-based model. By framing assistive technology as a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it aligns perfectly with the CRPD's mandate for full, independent inclusion in society.

Information on the resolution:

- Watch [UNWebTV](#) for the 15 minutes during which the draft resolution was discussed.
- Read the [Draft Resolution](#)

News

ISAAC-Denmark



The very first student in Denmark's new AAC Consultant programme has now completed the education.

This marks an important milestone: Denmark finally has an accredited state-approved programme that gives professionals in the AAC field the same legitimacy as speech-language therapists, literacy counsellors, occupational therapists, and others working in specialised education and disability services.

A long-standing gap has been filled. Historically, Denmark has had no formal AAC education and no dedicated research field. For many years, we have relied on new knowledge and training from neighbouring countries. Through our collaboration within ISAAC, we have received valuable insights and have been proud to support and develop initiatives inspired by that work.

Over the past nine years, together with the national patient and disability organisation and University College – the state institution for continuing education in care professions – we have developed a 60 ECTS programme. It was finally approved in August 2025, and in June this year, the first graduate was celebrated.

Why this education matters

Based on international and Norwegian figures, we estimate that around 25,000 people in Denmark have no spoken language or only very limited speech. The need for training in alternative and supplementary communication has therefore been evident for a long time.

Until now, around 300 students have been able to take individual modules that are now part of the full programme. But there has been a clear need for an accredited title that strengthens the professional authority of AAC guidance and signals to the outside world that AAC expertise is a vital part of the special education field.

The first AAC consultant: Mette Damkjær

Mette Damkjær, a pedagogue working in a residential community for adults with intellectual disabilities in Vejle, was among

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the first to enrol. She is now the first to complete the full programme and can officially call herself an AAC counsellor.

The fact that Mette – and many future AAC consultants – will now enter special schools, residential facilities and other practice settings with this qualification is very good news for people with no or very limited spoken language. It means they will meet professionals who have the knowledge and tools to give them a clearer voice in everyday life and more opportunities to participate in the communities they are part of – or wish to be part of.

“We are very proud that Mette Damkjær is now the first to call herself an AAC counsellor and is well equipped to ensure that the right to be heard and to participate in society also applies to people without or with very limited spoken language,” says Ida Mundt, associate professor at KP’s Institute for Lifelong Learning, who has extensive experience with AAC in disability services.

Everyone should be able to express wishes, thoughts and feelings. The right to be heard applies to all people – including those without spoken language.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that people with disabilities must be able to express themselves and communicate on an equal footing with other citizens. This is one of the reasons why strong professionalism in AAC is essential, says Mette Damkjær.

She recently completed her final project, “When communication becomes a shared responsibility”. For her, AAC is not just about tools or methods:



Mette Damkjær pictured with her graduation project: a board showing all the ingredients to work with the colleagues.

“AAC is about creating the best conditions for all people to express wishes, needs, thoughts and feelings – and thereby have real opportunities for participation, influence and self-determination. I look forward to bringing my new knowledge even more into practice, strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration,

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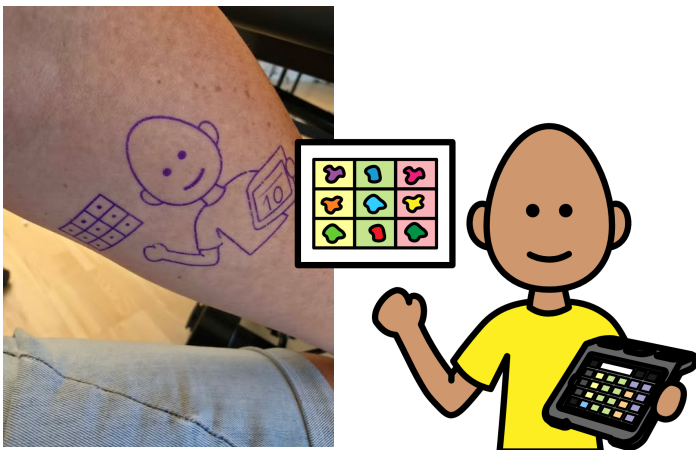
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and helping ensure that communication becomes a shared responsibility.”

ISAAC Denmark is very proud of Mette, who also serves on the Danish board. We have worked towards this goal for more than 12 years, and it has taken sustained effort to make it possible. With this milestone now achieved, we see it as a strong beginning — and the next step is to work towards establishing a dedicated research field in AAC.

In connection with Mette's graduation, she developed a PCS symbol in collaboration with Tobii Dynavox that illustrates the AAC Consultant. She transformed it into a tattoo that marks the special milestone in both her life and the Danish AAC environment (pictured below).



AAC Journal

What a busy year it has already been for *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*! With only four months left for 2026, here's everything our journal has been up to!

In March, the journal celebrated the release of our first issue of the year, Volume 42, Issue 1, a special issue on Basic Research in AAC. We are grateful to Dr. Krista Wilkinson (Pennsylvania State University) for serving as guest editor of this special issue that highlights the foundational research that provides innovations and often precedes clinical applications. Articles published in this special issue examine brain-computer interfaces to support children for touch-based AAC access, the effects of symbol format and placement for identification accuracy, brain-computer interface training strategies for AAC in children, visual-perceptual characteristics of AAC displays for individuals with Down syndrome, artificial intelligence applications for interpreting communicative moments, and the impacts of upright, hands-free self-initiated mobility.

In June, the journal released Volume 42, Issue 2, featuring a new selection of AAC research

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across eight manuscripts. This issue presents work on the following topics: online key word sign training, online AAC training programs for caregivers of children with autism, speech-language pathologists' perspectives on AAC assessment and intervention across language domains, the effects of lag schedule and progressive-time delay on request training, perspectives on tele-AAC in low- and middle-income countries, AAC interventions in India, effects of adapted literacy intervention on letter-sound correspondences, and empowering parents for AAC through training and coach intervention.

As we begin the month of September, the journal's latest issue, Volume 42, Issue 3, is now available online and in print. The twelve articles published in this issue share research findings on barriers to participation and learning for students who use AAC, AAC display design for students with intellectual disabilities, preservice training in AAC, narrative intervention for children with autism, single-preferred communication systems in American schools, patient-reported outcome measures and AAC interventions, leveraging smart device designs for children and dynamic social interactions, text versus

picture symbol representation, the role of time in communicative interactions, AAC interventions to promote commenting, communication-related quality of life in adults with acquired neurological disorders, and social validity assessment for training parents to support children using AAC.

The final issue of Volume 42 of AAC will be released in December 2026, and accepted articles continue to be published on a rolling basis online via Taylor & Francis. The Editorial Team thanks its many contributors, Associate Editors, and Reviewers whose dedication and commitment ensure the journal remains a strong research outlet for the field of AAC.

Read *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* on Taylor & Francis:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/iaac20>.

Stay updated on *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* through ISAAC:
<https://isaac-online.org/aacjournal>

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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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The ISAAC Communicator

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