

THE ISAAC COMMUNICATOR

March 2022

Message from the ISAAC President

Juan Bornman

Dear ISAAC Family,

Recently, Leonard Cohen's song "*Like a bird on the wire ... I have tried in my way to be free*" has made nest in my heart. It is a song that contemplates the impossibility of freedom in a world where all kinds of restraints are omnipresent.

This got me thinking – *why do birds sit on wires?* According to "Dr. Google" power lines (aka wires) provide them with an uninterrupted view of the world below, - which is a great unobstructed vantage point if they're foraging for food or trying to stay out of reach of land predators like cats. Additionally, in cold weather the power lines also give an extra bit of warmth as the air surrounding them is usually a little warmer.

I also noticed that typically when one sees birds on power lines, they sit together – evenly spaced, "chirping" to each other in a very sociable manner and if a new bird comes along, looking for a place to perch, the other birds will

...continued on page 2



Inside this issue

[From the Executive Director](#)

Page 4-6

[News](#)

Page 7-14

[PWU AAC Chats](#)

Page 15



Message from the ISAAC President ...continued

happily move along the wire to make room for the newcomer.

You see, in some ways, we are like the birds too... but during the past two years many of us have lost our songs. Lost our place on the wire. Lost the other birds who used to perch with us. We feel like the psalmist who wrote: "I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. I have become like a bird alone on a roof."

In this time we have watched markets crumble, businesses close, jobs become redundant and salaries reduced. We have witnessed schools emptying while hospitals were filled to the brim and beyond. We stood by as streets emptied with people forced to work from home. Online meetings became the flavour of the day and tele-practice was on everybody's lips. At the end of 2020, we were hopeful that 2021 would provide the magic "reset" button. How wrong we were! The second wave hit us like a tsunami and ISAAC did not escape the impact. We lost members. Members lost loved ones. 2021 was characterised by many disruptions and stop-start-repeat became our new mantra. Again, we had to postpone the ISAAC Cancun Conference. Vaccination,

boosters, a deeper understanding of the virus and how to better protect ourselves helped when Omicron reared its ugly head... and we collectively started breathing again...

This fledgeling joy and peace we felt was unfortunately short-lived as we watched a new human tragedy of catastrophic proportions unfold in Ukraine. An intense war with far-reaching ramifications that impacts, like COVID-19, many of our members and their loved ones. The world appears to drift from crisis to crisis...

As with COVID-19, this war has shown us all how interconnected every aspect of our lives are: our health and our family, our education and our employment, our community and our environment. That is why it is now opportune for us to think about *eudaimonia* – a Greek word that literally means "a state of good spirit". In other words, happiness or welfare or flourishing. Not in a quick fix manner or by thinking up short-term solutions, but rather by sharing ideas in an effort to build a deeper understanding of the core challenges that confront us. It's about learning that although we cannot control all our thoughts, we can direct them. And then, while pondering how to

...continued on page 3

Message from the ISAAC President ...continued

remain resilient and flourish in the turbulent and changing times in which we live ... it happened.

One summer evening, sitting in our garden, lost in thought, I became aware of a silent presence. As my eyes became more adjusted to the darkness, I realised that I was looking into the eyes of a Giant Eagle Owl. He just sat there, looking at me ... forcing me to become totally quiet. To be totally present in the moment. A magical moment when the whole world suddenly became quiet.

Perhaps this is what we need more of: encounters when time stands still. Admiration for how each living creature contributes to our planet. To discover how our stories intertwine, sometimes without words. To truly see each other and acknowledge: I am here, and you are here – at this moment – in this place. In Africa, we say that owls are the wisest of all

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



birds – because the more they see, the less they talk... and the less they talk, the more they hear...

Therefore, my wish for every single one of our members is that you may have more encounters with birds! That you make time to sit with others and create space for more to join. That you may be present in the moment and allow yourself to be in awe of the beauty around you. Remember: Owl you need is love! Give up the things that weigh you down – otherwise you'll never be able to fly.

As we enter the second quarter of 2022 - may we all find peace in our hearts. Peace in our souls.

Juan

[Juan Bornman](#)

ISAAC President 2020 -2022

From the Executive Director

Franklin Smith

Welcome to the March 2022 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

I am admittedly having a difficult time writing these opening comments.

I wanted to begin with a very positive message of the approaching spring season in the northern hemisphere linked to continuing downward trends in COVID mortalities, hospitalizations, and case counts around the world. This is what we are currently experiencing in Canada, and many other countries around the world are seeing the same.

This is tempered though by the human tragedies playing out amongst ordinary groups of people in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, and other neighbouring countries throughout eastern Europe. ISAAC International has already released a statement about the [situation in Ukraine](#) and our President, Juan Bornman, has [released an official communication](#) on behalf of ISAAC International.



As an organization, ISAAC remains focused on continuing to support AAC throughout the world, and especially in areas experiencing natural or man-made disasters. Please make sure to check out the [resources currently available on the ISAAC website](#) to help ordinary citizens with AAC support requirements.

ISAAC 2022 Membership

Membership renewal packages on behalf of ISAAC International, ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-US (USSAAC) and, our newest Chapter, ISAAC-Singapore, were sent out during November 2021, with reminder notices sent also during January – February 2022.

One final round of reminders will be sent in the coming few weeks, so if you have not yet renewed your membership in ISAAC for 2022, now is the time!

If you are a member of ISAAC through any of our other Chapters around the world, you should be hearing from, or may have already been contacted by, your Chapter for 2022 membership renewal.

Membership renewals for 2022 are so far significantly outpacing renewals from this

...continued on page 5

From the Executive Director ... continued



same time last year, which is, of course, great news! We look forward to providing all our members around the world with exciting and varied opportunities to stay connected with, and grow, our field of AAC.

ISAAC Manager of Communications

I am thrilled to introduce the ISAAC world to our new Manager of Communications, Cheryl Jackson.



Cheryl brings to ISAAC International a wealth of communications experience gained within Canada's not-for-profit and broadcasting sectors. Cheryl's collaborative approach to projects and teams, as exemplified by her past work experience, is an important reason for her being added to the Toronto-based ISAAC staff team.

Cheryl's expertise in project management combined with her good sense of humour is already making a difference here at ISAAC

International, as we embark on a number of critical projects for 2022....

Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

The ISAAC International Executive Board (EB) has been extremely active during Q1 2022 (January through March) in undertaking a review of our current Strategic Plan (2018-2021), and updating it for 2022-25. In addition to our valued EB members, ISAAC staff members have also been involved in this effort.

The ISAAC EB is close to finalizing a draft Strategic Plan 2022-25 document, and will be forwarding it to the ISAAC Council shortly for their review and comment.

ISAAC International Website Redevelopment

The current ISAAC International website and code base is now over 10 years old. In the world of software development, that is considered ancient!

We have been able to successfully manage our website over these past 10 years, owing to the amazing job of building that our Finnish team of software developers performed all those years ago. On-going management of the ISAAC International website has been further greatly supported by our Managers of

...continued on page 6

From the Executive Director ... continued

Communication (Heather and Cheryl), as well as Andre, our amazing webmaster located on Vancouver Island, on Canada's beautiful Pacific coast!

A big round of applause to everyone.

In order to ensure that our website will continue to run flawlessly into the future, it is now time to begin the process of redeveloping the website. A website redevelopment project plan has been developed and, over the course of the next 12 to 14 months, we will be engaging with staff, volunteers, and external third-party providers, to re-design and re-launch the ISAAC International website, projected to take place during March 2023.

We look forward to providing continuous updates in The ISAAC Communicator.

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President and Executive
Director are available in
French, Italian, and
Portuguese translation on our
[website](#).*

Conference Cancún



ISAAC International recently announced a postponement of Conference Cancún until 2023.

We are currently involved in discussions with our venue host, the Cancún International Convention Centre (ICC), with regard to finalizing possible dates.

All ISAAC members can expect to hear further details as they become available during 2022.

In the meantime, the Conference Cancún online registration system is [open and available](#).

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

Regards and thanks,

[Franklin Smith](#)

ISAAC Executive Director

News



ISAAC-NF

isaac-nf

“Speeltuimbord ISAAC-NF PCS versie” and “Speeltuimbord ISAAC-NF SymbolStix versie”

Every playground should be accessible for anyone, that includes individuals with complex communication needs (CCN). As clearly stated in the UN Conventions on the rights of individuals with disabilities, there should be no obstacles for participation. To stimulate communication and play between individuals with and without CCN we created AAC Playground Boards. Using the pictograms, you can say it's “your turn”, or you want to “stop”, or maybe you want to go “home” or you really “like” another child. The boards can be used by anyone and are especially useful for those who do not have access to a robust AAC system and have trouble communicating with and/or understanding verbal speech (in our case: Dutch). It is therefore not only a tool for those with CCN, but also for refugees or individuals who do not speak Dutch (yet) due to immigration or age. With the cooperation of both Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) and SymbolStix (SS) we are able to provide free downloads which are of sufficient quality to print on A0. Besides the

individual advantages in the playground, we also hope that they will a) foster inclusion of individuals with AAC in broader society, as AAC is more visible for the general public and b) introduce AAC to those who have never heard of it (and might need it).



You can download the AAC Playground boards here:

<https://www.isaac-nf.nl/overons/artikelen-en-onderzoek>.

Communication Matters



Communication Matters International AAC Conference 2022 - Call for Papers

You are invited to contribute to the Communication Matters 2022 International AAC Conference (11-13 September, University of Leeds).

We have based our topic areas on the three aspects of evidence-based practice which constitute improved outcomes for all.

... News continues on page 8

News

... continued



These aspects are:

- **Best Research Evidence:** Papers submitted under this heading are carried out by independent organisations such as education, social or health services and universities. Authors should pay particular attention to describing the methodology and results of the study.
- **Clinical and Professional Experience:** Papers submitted under this heading may include service development, audit or implementation projects, as well as practice reports. Typically, these papers will be presented by health or education professionals or those working for other organisations for AAC users.
- **Personal Stories and Preferences:** Papers submitted under this heading would include personal experience stories, single case studies and examples of AAC in the wider community. We particularly welcome contributions from AAC users and family members.

Again, this year we will be using an online submission programme called Aventri. You will be asked to login and submit a simple form with a title and a short summary about your talk (maximum 300 words).

Papers can be submitted as either a **Platform** presentation (45-minutes), a **Poster**, or a **Lightning Talk** (6.25 minutes).

The deadline for submissions is **22 April 2022**. However, we would encourage you to submit your abstract as soon as possible to help with our planning.

For further information and to submit an abstract, please visit our [website](#).

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the opportunity, please email admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

Communication Matters Study Day 2022 – Save The Date!

Becoming an Aided Communicator (BAC) - Theory, Methods, Findings and Practical Implications

When? Tuesday 21st June 2022, 10am to 4pm (registration at 9.30am)

Where? University of Leeds or Zoom

Who? An international team, led by Prof. Stephen von Tetzchner, University of Oslo, Norway

The focus of this Study Day is on the language and communication opportunities of children and young people who are learning language using aided communication. It may be of interest to anyone involved in supporting the language development of aided communicators who use low-tech and/or high-tech systems.

... News continues on page 9

News

... continued

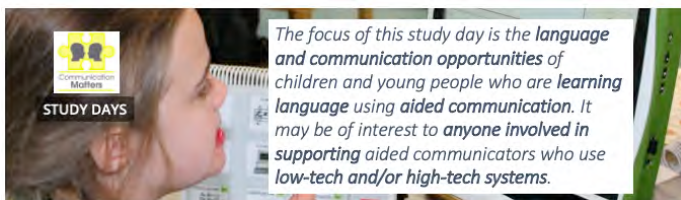


The Study Day has two parts, a presentation part (10am-1pm) and a discussion part (2-3.30pm). Many of the project members plan to participate in person. The first part of the Study Day will present ideas and results from the project. Each presentation will involve one lead presenter and several co-presenters. The presentations can be attended in person or on Zoom. After the parallel sessions, the groups will come together for a 30-minute summary and wrap-up session (3.30-4pm).

Find out more about the BAC Project and the Study Day on our website:

<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/what-we-do/study-days/>

Registration coming soon!



Receive updates about our events!

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/communicationmattersuk>

Twitter - https://twitter.com/Comm_Matters

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

admin@communicationmatters.org.uk.

ISAAC Denmark



Conference

ISAAC Denmark is looking forward to our first non-virtual conference since 2019, 28th and 29th of March. Usually, we have a yearly conference, but we have had (amazingly successful) webinars with presentations from the conference 2020 during 2021.

The international presenters on the 2022 conference will be Juliet Goldbart – present on site! Wow! And Janice Light, online.

A Swedish presentation from Amanda Nyberg is focusing on violence and abuse and how to prevent it in relation to young people with communication challenges, and how to get a language about the subject.

Our Norwegian presenter is Anne-Merete Kleppeness. She is working in Statped. Her job is to be responsible of spreading the news of AAC in Norway.

We are looking forward to learning new from our neighbor countries.

In Denmark there is a clash between the European rules, GDPR that are made to regulate to secure citizens rights in digital life, but often become an obstacle in daily life for people who have communication disabilities.

... News continues on page 10

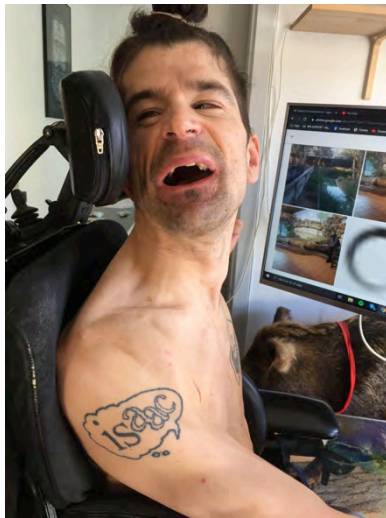
News

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The staff around these people often get too scared about the rules limiting the AAC users' access to for instance photos of the persons they live with or the staff members. This will be a theme at our conference among with so much more:

For instance, board member and AAC user is **Jeppe Forchammer** (below) talking about sexuality, keynote start of the conference!



And an AAC user meeting on the subject "Art and Communication" with AAC user Frank Dalhoff as presenter. After the user meeting there will be an art exhibition for the whole conference. Sofie Berner Møller – AAC user-will finish the conference, reading her poems.

ISAAC Denmark is back on the same level economically as before we had to cancel the conference 2020 and 2021. Our successful

webinar row in 2021 and the successful AAC and autism day in Copenhagen have given unexpected profit, and we are now more willing to take new initiatives than we were at the beginning of 2020.

Regional 2 meetings

Region 2: Sweden Netherlands/Flanders, Poland, Norway, Russian Federation, and Denmark

Region 2 is a very busy region, having more meetings than we were asked to have from ISAAC international. We get a lot of inspiration from the meetings. Examples of this: Netherlands made a nice film that we now will subtitle for the rest of the region 2.

[https://vimeo.com/625473616#_ =](https://vimeo.com/625473616#_=)

We are getting news from each other's chapters, and we are planning to have common webinars on the subjects:

- Assessment of Cognitive skills (Janelle Sampson Australia, ROCC)
- Transitions for AAC users (Synnøve Flatebo, Norway, David McNaughton)
- Communicative accessibility (<https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/projects-cauk/>, Catherine Harris UK)
- The right to communicate, legislation and UN convention

Besides the webinars, we plan to discuss common subjects in the chapter: accessible websites, involving more AAC users in ISAAC and how could we give value to the members?

... News continues on page 11

News

... continued



ISAAC Italy



Giuseppina Castellano, the vice president of ISAAC Italy, has started a YouTube channel where songs about peace are translated into symbols using Blissymbolics and Arasaac to be accessible to everybody.

You can watch the videos here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLeeLs6yIHm3pB2m2zsvS6Q>

Communications Disabilities Access



Barbara Collier, Executive Director, Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC), arrived in Canada in 1979. In February of 2022, she and Bill are leaving Canada and making a big move to Ireland,

43 years later!

You can watch the Barbara Collier celebration video here: <https://youtu.be/b3sbZavVSA8>

As of Feb. 18, 2022, **Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC)** is revisioning the organization to have an on-line presence only with consultations on a fee-for-service basis.

Over the past 22 years, CDAC has promoted accessibility for people who have a wide range of disabilities that affect one or more areas of understanding spoken and written language, retaining information, problem-solving and/or expressing what they want to communicate. With no core funding, CDAC has worked at federal, provincial and international levels to describe the accessibility rights and requirements of people who use a variety of ways to communicate and who need accessible communication in community services, businesses, healthcare and education settings, police, legal and justice services.

Always in collaboration with people who have communication disabilities, CDAC's free, online resources, webinars, trainings, and policy recommendations are used by thousands of persons who have disabilities, families and support persons, policy makers, legislators, clinicians, human rights commissions, capacity adjudicators, healthcare, police, lawyers and justice professionals.

... News continues on page 12

News

... continued



While it is recognized that CDAC's work is not done, there is a solid foundation to guide the development of meaningful accessibility standards and regulations for people who have speech, language and communication disabilities.

Thank you to those who have supported CDAC over the years. You may continue to use CDAC's website resources and trainings to advance accessible services and human rights for Canadians who have disabilities that affect their communication.

CDAC website:

<https://www.cdacanada.com/>

CDAC email: admin@cdacanada.com

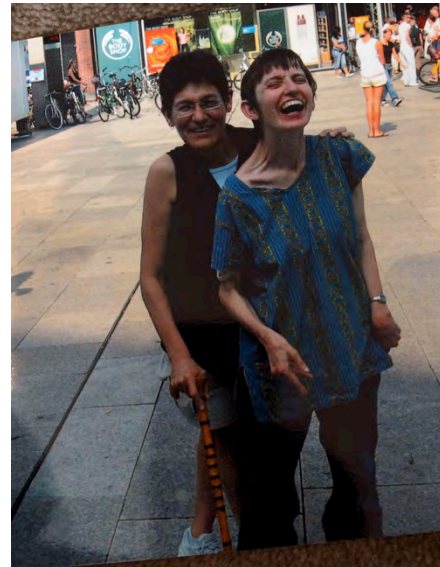
Karen Bloomberg

Based on the eulogy of Hilary Johnson. Poem by Nicola Grove © Nov 2021.

Karen Bloomberg died on 27th January. Karen's passion was friendship and that is how Karen will be remembered throughout ISAAC as a friend and as someone passionate about giving others communication.

In Australia, Karen will be remembered for her enormous contributions as a speech pathologist, co-conspirator, entertainer, educator and trailblazer.

Her commitment was rooted in her feminism, lesbian identity and disability advocacy. We were all inspired by her innovation because it came from a firm belief it was the right thing to do. And she inspired through her dry sense of humour and practical demonstration of what to do in any situation. That ability made her the perfect leader and encouraged confidence in any of her projects.



(Karen & Meredith in Düsseldorf 2006)

Her work in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) was marked by a series of firsts. She achieved so much because she was finisher, she was pragmatic, she ticked most of the boxes not always the one on reflection – but then she had her partner, Libby, to provide her with that. Karen of course brushed off any accolades and argued it was not due to her.

... News continues on page 13

News

... continued



As a pioneer of AAC she started AGOSCI (Australian group on severe communication impairment) in 1981 and worked tirelessly for the ensuing years bringing international speakers to Australia to make sure people with little or no speech got the best services and support available.

In 1982, she pioneered the first Australian “non-speech camp”. This involved taking the children she worked with for an intensive experience of AAC at a farm and in the community. Karen in her inclusive way opened the local community’s eyes to the everyday experience of having a disability to ensure participation in the community was a right not a privilege. She drew symbols on sticky labels and stuck them everywhere so that children could learn about objects and how to represent them (sticking them on the animals themselves were rather tricky and a close encounter with an emu was rather scary).

She was of the first people to be trained in Makaton by Margaret Walker – Makaton became known as Key Word Sign (KWS) in Australia. Karen and Libby’s work in KWS has vastly improved the landscape of AAC services and the participation of people with an intellectual disability.

In 1983, Karen was the first Australian to go to the US to complete a master’s degree in AAC on a scholarship. She studied at Purdue University with Lyle Lloyd as her supervisor. This enabled her to develop worldwide networks, be aware of the latest research and obtain grants to continue AAC innovation for Australians.

Another first was our research In 1985, when Karen and her colleagues realised that they couldn’t improve our supports for people with little or no speech without knowing more about their demographics and characteristics. This led to a piece of research which not only provided a basis for the funding for electronic communication aid in the state of Victoria (and other states in Australia) but also Medicaid in the US. This research was also personally influential and drove Karen’s desire to change service supports. The research process involved gathering information on everyone in the state of Victoria who had what we termed in those days a “severe communication impairment”. Karen didn’t have too many statistical skills in those days and didn’t know about sampling - the information was painstakingly gathered by endless phone calls and going out to count people. At that time many people lived in large institutions and the only way to get that information was to go to the institutions and meet the people. Many tears were shed during the data collection process at the living conditions in the institutions.

... News continues on page 14

News

... continued



She was one of the first directors of ISAAC (International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication). This organisation is based in Canada and her involvement spurred on her travel plans. Every two years she attended ISAAC presenting papers, developing AAC friendships in many countries and promoting Australia.

She innovated with technology. A trailblazer in the use of pictographs for people with little or no speech who lacked literacy. In her early days she hand drew symbols on communication aids and then pioneered COMPIC the first set of computerised pictures with an Australian vocabulary (including words like kangaroo, vegemite surfboard).

She was a video maker extraordinaire who completely controlled the finished product. She devised the scenario, wrote the scripts, directed the editing, did the voiceovers while pulling all her friends in to do it on the cheap.

Karen's work lives on through the Triple C, the InterAAction package, the Key Word Sign app, teaching of students speech pathology at La Trobe university and in clinical placements. All exemplary – all with good will and most of it with a welcoming smile

on her face. But what made Karen stand out from other outstanding speech pathologists were her politics. Her disability politics meant all her work was infused with a person first approach.

In 1982, she took a different sort of first by being the first employee with a disability that the Spastic Society of Victoria tried to sack for opposing the charity model of funding services for people with a disability. The threatened sacking resulted from a letter Karen sent to the organisation stating she would do all in her power to oppose the Miss Victoria quest – a major fundraiser conceptually based as a beauty pageant. Karen's job was saved by her union, incredible individuals and her outstanding work in speech pathology.

Karen is a champion and always will be. We all still talk of Karen in the present tense, she is still very much with us.

For Karen:

Something witchy about you	A fierce and shining candour
Truth telling see-r	Backbone
Bent like a thorn tree	And I remember the garden
That weathers the wind	The glowing colour under the
And when your face cracks open	hot sun
in a smile	How two so joined
The blossom.	Opened love and company
Forty years of coming together	The star blazes, falls
Across continents	The light remains
You speak the hidden words	Your voice in my ear
That some do not want to hear	

Chapters



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ISAAC-Poland • aac.org.pl

ISAAC-Singapore • www.isaac-singapore.org/

ISAAC-Sweden • www.isaac-sverige.se

ISAAC-Taiwan • twsaac.blogspot.com

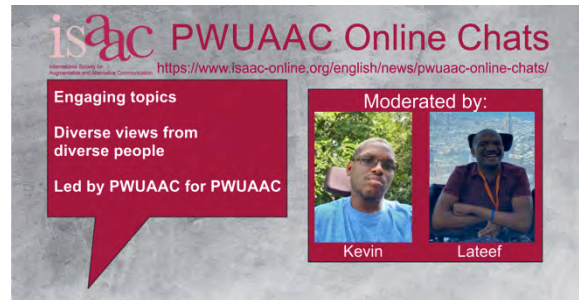
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Do you have a question or comment?
Please feel free to send an email to
feedback@isaac-online.org

PWUAAC Online Chats



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

ISAAC Webinars

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



Our Vision & Mission



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

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

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

Stay Connected

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

Stay Social

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



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The ISAAC Communicator

Published four times each year. Comments welcome!
Please contact [Chloe Leon](#).

