



## **Message from the President**

### **Tracy Shepherd**

Welcome to the 19th Biennial ISAAC Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in Cancún, México: Communication Beyond Borders! Greetings to all who have come together for this event: people who use AAC, family members, professionals, researchers, and everyone interested in AAC.

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 conferences are important to fulfilling ISAAC's vision and mission. Conferences provide a unique opportunity to learn about AAC, to discuss latest research and technological developments, to connect with like-minded people, to get involved, to begin or continue partnerships, and to make friends.

It has been since 2018 that we have been able to gather together in person, so this conference will be outstanding to form new connections and renew old ones. In addition, this year marks 40 years of ISAAC's history and our 20<sup>th</sup> conference (if you count ISAAC Connect in 2021). I remember well the first ISAAC conference I attended in 1992, in Philadelphia, USA. I presented my Master's Thesis and was so excited and honoured to be there among all the "big names" I had read about in textbooks and journals.

I offer you this challenge – meet 5 new people this week from at least 3 different countries. Our renewed connection will help move the field of AAC forward. ISAAC members like to ask each other "What was your first ISAAC conference?" So what a great conversation starter with someone you have not yet met. Let's make this conference all about connecting and communication beyond borders! Whether this is your first ISAAC conference or one of many, I hope you can feel the spirit here and find new energy for your work in your part of the world.

The international orientation of ISAAC includes emerging and developed countries, regions with many experiences and well-developed services, as well as regions with engaged individuals who are in the process of building up AAC structures. One focus of recent years has been expanding the reach of ISAAC into Spanish

speaking countries; therefore, ISAAC has been committed to holding this conference here in Mexico. I am happy to see many presentations on the program and attendees from Spanish speaking countries.

We are looking forward to a great conference program, with many interesting presentations and lectures during the Pre-Conference and the Main Conference days, and enjoyable social events showcasing Mexican history and culture, and accompanied by exciting performances.

Many thanks to all who have made this possible, to all who engage on behalf of AAC and ISAAC worldwide, and to all who join us on this journey.

***Tracy Shepherd***

***ISAAC President 2022 - 2024***