

Upfront



Not so many years ago, information about augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies, techniques and technologies was sparse and difficult to find. Fortunately, times have changed. As we approach the year 2000, resources in AAC are far more readily available. In fact, many in the AAC community feel there is so much information that it is impossible to stay current. That is the good news.

The bad news is that, although information exists, too many people do not have access to it. McNaughton suggests that “the gap between what is actually available to AAC users in their schools, living situations and communities and what we know through AAC literature is widening”¹ Barriers that interfere include:

- **Lack of awareness.** Most people have never heard of augmentative communication. Healthcare professionals and educators are often ill-informed about AAC options. This lack of awareness reflects the fact that AAC is a relatively new and still quite small area of practice.
- **Language obstacles.** While an increasing number of resources are available, much important information is not translated and shared among all members of the AAC community.
- **Social, political and economic factors.** Even in countries where

AAC is an accepted area of practice, and where laws exist that specify an individual’s right to AAC services and devices, healthcare and educational systems continue to restrict access. Sadly, the reluctance to offer information, services and devices more often affects people with socio-economic disadvantages, no matter where they live.

Despite these barriers, an increasing number of people actively seek and find information about AAC. Some want answers to a specific question, e.g., “What is available for my father who had a

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For Consumers



Four Stages of Knowing

The Stages of Knowing² represent a dynamic continuum of knowledge within an area of practice, a field or a discipline. Stage I describes the novice (*Don’t know that you don’t know*), while Stage IV defines the expert (*Don’t know that you know*). Stages II (*Know that you don’t know*) and III (*Know that you know*) are points along the way to developing expertise. In larger, more advanced fields, such as medicine and speech-language pathology, the general public knows about the field and many stakeholders occupy each stage. However, in

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newer, more specialized areas of practice like AAC, there are few people at stages two, three and four.

The growth and development of any field will depend upon the foundations of knowledge made accessible through a variety of information resources that support the needs and preferences of learners at each stage. New ideas, approaches and technologies create a continuous need for up-to-date information and new learning.

Stage One: Don’t know that you don’t know

Most people are at a Stage I when it comes to AAC. Here are two examples:

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1. During a conversation with a stranger on an airplane, the stranger asks, "What do you do?" You reply, "Oh, I work in an area called augmentative communication." "What's that?" the stranger asks, as her eyes begin to shut. You give a brief explanation. She opens up a novel and says, "Oh, that's nice." The conversation generally ends there unless you tell some interesting stories about people who use AAC. I always try to.

2. My business phone rings and the person on the line says hesitantly, "Hello? Is this argumentative communication?" "Not exactly," I respond. "This is Augmentative Communication, Inc. We publish two newsletters about augmentative communication. Thanks for calling. Can I help you?" The voice on the other end laughs nervously. I say to myself, of course, "Stage one."

As a field, we are responsible for raising the awareness of people about AAC. But how? Packaging information so it appeals to the general public, *i.e.*, the uninitiated, is a well-established business that we can learn, and then use.

- **Media coverage.** Press releases, newspaper and TV stories, videotapes and positive exposure to AAC users can dramatically raise awareness. Unfortunately, when the popular media give inaccurate or incomplete information, it can be very confusing for people who have no background in AAC, and quite disconcerting for those who do. A recent example of misinformation was the "it's a miracle"

coverage of Facilitated Communication by the print and TV media in the U.S.³

- **Celebrities.** Celebrities have the power to reach thousands of people with a single message. For example, Neil Young, a well-known rock musician, has a son who is an augmented communicator. Each year he and his wife Pegi host a benefit concert (the Bridge School Concert) that highlights Young and other popular musicians (Elton John, Bonny Raitt, *etc.*). Proceeds support the Bridge School, a private school for children who use AAC. At each concert, thousands of the uninitiated learn something about AAC. [Recently, the Bridge School expanded its outreach program and awarded the first ISAAC/Bridge School Teacher-in-Residence to Usha Dalvi from India. When Ms. Dalvi returns to her university in Bombay, she will train speech-language pathologists in the use of AAC.]
- **Famous AAC users.** The most famous AAC user is undoubtedly Professor Stephen Hawking, a scientist and a scholar as well as someone who uses AAC. Hawking's ability to lecture on complex topics in physics using AAC techniques informs people about the benefits of AAC. He also dispels stereotypes about the capabilities of individuals with severe physical and communication impairments. Many other well-known AAC users around the world also educate the uninitiated (and the initiated) with their presence and messages.
- **Political arena.** Legislators and policymakers who understand the impact of AAC devices and services are more likely to make

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stroke and can't talk?" Others are engaged in a lifelong process of learning about AAC. The challenge for the field is that while all AAC stakeholders need information, they do not want or require the same kinds of information.

In addition, adult learners have different learning styles and preferences that determine where and how they will access information. Some prefer to attend conferences or participate in workshops; others choose to stay close to home. Financial resources also influence the choices people make, as do employers who may (or may not) support the learning process.

To address the information needs of AAC stakeholders, a variety of resources is required. **For Consumers** describes a paradigm I find very useful—the Stages of Knowing—because it applies to the spectrum of information needs in AAC. These stages identify why we require a diversity of resources to promote the

growth and development of AAC.

I asked a number of AAC stakeholders what information sources they depend upon. **Clinical News, Equipment and University/Research** sections report what they said. While far from inclusive, these lists are interesting. Many thanks to those who contributed. (See page 8.) **Governmental** focuses on resources offered through ISAAC. **On the Web** highlights ACOLUG, a unique listserv for people who use AAC, their families and others in the AAC community.

Finally, I am well aware that I continue to be behind in writing ACN, and I appreciate your ongoing patience.

Sarah W. Blackstone, Author



decisions that benefit AAC users. A 1997 Report to the Minnesota State Legislature is a good example.⁴ The cover contained a large (4" x 2") piece of duct tape with the words: "Imagine spending a day with your mouth taped shut." Inside were data documenting the benefits of AAC devices and services and demographic information about the AAC needs of people in Minnesota. As a result, funding for AAC devices and services passed the Minnesota legislature.

- **Advertisements.** AAC companies that advertise in disability magazines, journals and newsletters broaden the awareness of readers. When ads in the mainstream press highlight someone who uses AAC, the impact is even greater.
- **The Arts.** Occasionally a dramatic performance spotlights someone who uses AAC techniques. For example, in the movie *My Left Foot* a man with cerebral palsy uses his foot to spell out messages. Also, Michael Zaslow, an actor with ALS, appeared in a TV episode using his voice output communication device. These performances raise the level of awareness of audiences everywhere about the value of AAC.

Generally, an external (or unexpected) event or situation causes someone to transition from Stage I to Stage II. Students, educators, clinicians and policymakers often do so because of their academic and/or job responsibilities. However, families with children who have severe communication impairments and adults with degenerative or acquired conditions generally make the transition reluctantly and with

great difficulty. Stage I is sometimes referred to as the "Ignorance is bliss" stage.

Stage Two: Know that you don't know

Not surprisingly, adults at Stage II report feeling anxious and uncomfortable. Their questions often reflect this anxiety and their limited understanding of AAC:

"Will AAC make my child stop trying to talk?"

"What device should we buy my Mom who recently was diagnosed with motor neuron disease?"

Stage II is also difficult because many adults are not used to tackling things they don't know about and aren't good at. Thus, major information goals for Stage II are to (a) dispel myths, (b) answer specific questions and (c) encourage new learning. Coaching, mentoring, careful listening and targeted learning experiences need to accompany the information provided. In addition, meaningful "hands on" experiences are important.

Effective methods for providing information during Stage II may include:

- **Videotapes.** Videos that answer basic questions like "What is AAC," as well as those that introduce AAC strategies and devices, are helpful. Homegrown videos can be just as effective as professionally produced ones at this stage. Many people find the personal stories of others enlightening. (For examples in English, see page 5.)
- **Newsletters, articles and books.** Newsletters, articles and books that focus on specific topics and/or approaches to the use of AAC techniques make learning easier. Books written by or about AAC users are particularly valuable.
- **Product information.** 800 phone

numbers, catalogs, workshops, exhibitions and product demonstrations are highly appreciated at all stages.

- **Workshops/courses/conferences.** Conferences can be intimidating unless they are designed with Stage II learners in mind. Many adults prefer to learn through coursework or workshops that organize their learning experiences.
- **Internet.** More and more people look for information over the Internet. While this allows learning to occur conveniently, it also can result in learning without guidance, which at this stage is not advisable.
- **Networking.** Conversations with knowledgeable families and professionals are a valuable and valued source of information.

The transition from Stage II to III occurs more gradually than the transition from Stage I to II. Fortunately, as access to information increases and learning occurs, anxiety decreases. Those making this transition generally do so because they have a growing interest in AAC. They can now begin to appreciate what they "know" as well as what they "don't know."

Stage Three: Know that you know

Individuals at Stage III have lots of information about AAC strategies, devices and techniques. Some have formed strong opinions about what works and what does not. This group is increasingly knowledgeable about and comfortable with: (a) their own strengths and limitations, (b) working with a team, (c) a variety of AAC techniques and devices, (d) AAC-related organizations and special interest groups and

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(e) how to keep up with developments in the field. Examples of behaviors indicative of Stage III are:

1. Having conversations with colleagues or family members using jargon unrecognizable to others (*e.g.*, Boardmaker, Dynamyte, Scanning WSKE, and linguistic prediction). Huh?
2. Waking up in the middle of the night thinking about a communication solution for a client or family member.

Stage III individuals have been “around” for awhile and their needs are diverse and extensive. They rely on:

- **Books.** Those interviewed read generic AAC texts, biographical stories and books that target specific populations and AAC practices. (See page 6.) They also read books in their own fields (*e.g.*, occupational therapy, special education, and so on).
- **Workshops/Conferences.** Workshops and conferences offer opportunities to discuss ideas and learn about technology and its applications, clinical approaches, theories and research. Networking that occurs at these gatherings is highly valued. Also, AAC product exhibitions enable learners to keep up with the latest technological developments and AAC materials.
- **Consultation.** AAC has some well-known clinical entrepreneurs (*e.g.*, Carole Goossens, Carolyn Musselwhite, Andrew Bondy/Lori Frost, Pati King-DeBaun, Hilary Johnson/Karen Bloomberg and others) who create materials, develop intervention approaches and who also teach and provide consultation. Less well known, but by no means less important, are the many local AAC experts (professionals and consumers) who offer

consultation and training within their communities.

- **Product catalogs.** At this stage, individuals have drawers or files full of AAC related catalogs and are getting AAC junk mail.
- **Organizations.** Organizations devoted to AAC (ISAAC and its eleven chapters) and special interest groups in professional organizations (ASHA-SIG 12) provide newsletters and other important information resources. They also provide forums for advocacy, networking and problem solving.
- **Academic programs.** Undergraduate and graduate courses in AAC address important training needs. Many universities offer summer programs, distance learning and continuing education opportunities for Stage III learners.
- **Journals/magazines/newsletters.** Periodicals support the diverse needs of AAC stakeholders. The journal, *AAC*, for example, disseminates important research which, in turn, stimulates growth in the field. Many other journals also publish articles that relate to AAC. Newsletters and magazines help to bridge the gap between research and practice, as well as offer forums within which to discuss and consider current issues. (See page 6.)

Over time, only a few individuals make the transition from Stage III to IV. Those who do have been in the field a long time, and are most likely to have gray hair.

Stage Four: Don't know that you know

This relatively small but growing group is very knowledgeable about AAC. Stage IV individuals often work at AAC fulltime and get so immersed they literally lose touch

with how much they know. Their teaching, writing, research, development and mentoring focus on AAC. Many have leadership responsibilities and play an active role in AAC programs and activities at national and international levels.

The information needs of this group are two-tiered. They require access to information and materials to share with others, as well as information that can address their own specific interests, research agendas and learning needs. They rely on many of the resources already discussed and actively seek information from outside the field of AAC. This group clearly benefits from their collaboration with colleagues in the international AAC community.

Another feature of Stage IV learners is their active involvement in creating information (articles, books, products and so on). These activities continuously renew and expand their knowledge and skills in AAC. Stage IV learners are constantly recycling through the Stages of Knowing, which means they are revising and deepening their understandings of AAC issues and practices.

Summary

The Stages of Knowing provide a backdrop against which to consider the information needs of AAC. As individuals pass through each stage, their information needs change. The right information, provided in a meaningful format at just the right times, is critical to the sustained growth and development of our field.



Clinical News



Videotapes

While no videotape emerged as the current favorite, respondents find videos useful for

raising awareness and teaching. Specifically, they use videos to demonstrate “best practices,” AAC devices and characteristics of competent AAC users. They prefer videos that show AAC users communicating in natural environments. (See Table I.)

Resources for clinicians

I asked those listed on page 8 what information sources they currently find most useful. This section covers what they said about videotapes, therapy materials, conferences and newsletters (in English.)

Therapy Materials

Mayer-Johnson’s Boardmaker was mentioned most often as a useful therapy resource.⁵ Table I lists other materials cited. Respondents prefer clinical resources with a “how to” approach and ready-made materials. Their favorites ranged from relatively new products, e.g., *Building communicative competence*, to familiar approaches, like *Engineering the Environment*.

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Table I. Videos and therapy materials listed as resources by those surveyed

Title	Description	Available from
<i>Visions on video: Growing up capable</i>	Video. Shows basic applications of AT, simple technology in play etc. Good for teaching.	AbleNet, Inc. 1081 10th Avenue, SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414. 800-322-0956; http://www.ablenetinc.com
<i>In Other Words</i> ACE Centre/ISAAC	Video Depicts a broad range of people using AAC in real environments. Filmed in the UK. Easily dubbed into other languages.	ISAAC, .
<i>Picture Exchange Communication System</i> Bondy and Frost	Video and print materials. An overview of PECS. Discusses rationale. Gives examples with children with autism.. Many instructional materials also available.	Pyramid Educ. Consultants, 226 W. Park Place, #1, Newark, DE 19711, 888-732-7462 (phone); http://www.pecs.com
<i>Communicating Matters</i> Collier	Video and manual. Shows how to train personal attendants to work. Also, <i>See What We Say</i> is a practical tool for community living.	Hamony Place Support Services, 132 Railside Rd, #6, North York, Ontario, M3A 1A3, Canada. 416-510-0824 (fax). haans@interhop.net
<i>Teaching Social Skills</i> Gray	Video, stories & materials. Video explains rationale for teaching social skills to children with autism. Materials give "how to" information about social review, social stories, comic strip conversations strategies.	Future Horizons, Inc., 720 N. Fielder Rd., Arlington, TX 76012, 800-489-0727 (phone); 817-277-2270 (fax) www.onramp.net/autism
<i>Engineering Environments</i> Goossens', Crain & Elder	Books, displays, CD-ROM: <i>Engineering the preschool environment and training environments for interactive augmentative communication.</i> These books are highly regarded resources.	Mayer-Johnson, Co., PO Box 1579 Solana Beach, CA 92075. 619-550-0084 (phone); 619-550-0449 (fax) http://www.mayer-johnson.com
<i>Like a long battle</i> ISAAC-ISRAEL	Video. A highly effective video that tells the stories of a number of people who use AAC and addresses a range of issues. English subtitles.	ISAAC-ISRAEL, c/o J. Seligman-Wine, PO Box 400012, Mevasseret Zion 90805 Israel +972 2 5340581 (fax)
<i>PrAACtically Speaking</i> Johnson	Video and booklet. Shows adults using schedule boxes, conversation books, community request cards and objects to augment comprehension.	Functional Communication Outreach Service, 705 Geeleng Rd., Brooklyn VIC, 3025 Australia, 03 9314 9825 (fax)
<i>Building communicative competence</i> Light & Binger	Book. A practical, step-by-step, research based approach to teaching people who use AAC to develop competencies in face-to-face communication.	Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., PO Box, 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285 http:// www.pbrookes.com
<i>Attitudes and strategies towards AAC</i> Murphy and Scott	Manual. A training package for AAC users and carers that teaches advocacy skills. Useful in conducting workshops. Developed by ISAAC-UK.	Communication Matters, c/o ACE Centre, Oemerod School, Waynflote Rd, Headington, Oxford, OX3 8DD England. +44 870-6065463 (fax)
<i>Quick & easy ideas for home & classroom</i> Rouse and Katera	Video and book with displays. Practical guide to using symbols at home and in the classroom. For families and professionals. Shows how classroom and home activities can be adapted to meet each child's communication needs.	Creative Communication Solutions, 8516 W. Lake Mead, Suite 196, Las Vegas, NV 89128
<i>Tangible Symbols Systems</i> Rowland & Schweigert	Video and print materials. Shows instructional strategies conducted in "real live" classrooms with a variety of children who use tangible symbols.	Psychological Corporation, PO Box 839954, San Antonio, TX 78283. 800-211-8378. www.hbtpc.com
<i>Talk is Not a Four Letter Word</i>	Video. Outdated (1985), but "makes several good points."	ASHA, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852 301-897-5700; www.asha.org
<i>BlissCom</i>	Video. Shows kids using technology. Good intro to Bliss & technology. "Outdated but still works."	Blissymbolics Communication Inter., 1630 Lawrence Ave. West, #104, Toronto, Ontario M6L 1C6, Canada. 416-244-6543 (fax)
<i>Sharing Communication</i>	Video and manual. Strategies for communicative interaction between aided and unaided speakers. A bit outdated.	BC Rehabilitation Centre, 4255 Laurel Street, Vancouver, V5Z 2G9, 604-737-6224 (phone)

Table II. Strategies for maintaining speech in patients with ALS

Clinical News, Continued from page 5

Workshops/Conferences

All said they value the information and networking opportunities at conferences and workshops and favor conferences that focus on AAC and bring the AAC community together. The ISAAC Biennial Conference was mentioned most often. Others listed were:

1. ISAAC Chapter conferences (e.g., Communication Matters, ISAAC-Norway, ISAAC-Israel, ISAAC-NF, ISAAC-GSC, ISAAC-Sverige, ISAAC-Denmark, USSAAC) and the ISAAC Research Symposium.
2. Conferences that highlight AAC exhibits and manufacturer demonstrations (i.e., CAMA conferences, Closing the Gap, and the CSUN Technology Conference.)
3. Conferences hosted by ASHA, TASH and AAMR. Speech-language pathologists are enthusiastic about the SIG 12 sessions at the ASHA Convention.
4. Conferences focusing on a particular AAC topic, such as the Pittsburgh Employment Conference, AAC in the Mountains, the Carolina Literacy Symposium and Musselwhite's workshops.

Newsletters


Augmentative Communication News was the most mentioned newsletter. [Honest.] People wrote:

“Has an excellent overview of specific topics.” “Makes information accessible to all people involved in AAC.” “I refer parents and students also.” “Very concise, with lots of information,” “Easy to read.” “Keeps me up to date.”

Also mentioned were the:

ISAAC Bulletin (“It’s become much more interesting.”); *Communication Matters* (“The contents are of interest for non-British people.”); *Communicating Together*; *Communication Outlook*; *Alternatively Speaking*, *ASHA SIG - 12 newsletter (AAC)*; *Closing the Gap*.

Summary

Information about “best practices,” whether depicted on video, in writing or presented at conferences/workshops, is a critical component of the information that people need at all stages. 

*University
& Research*



Journals & books

The growth in AAC research activities and university training programs, as well as the availability of texts, journals, chapters and articles focused on AAC, has greatly increased access to information. All interviewed said the journal *Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)* “is the Bible for the field.” It is the only peer-reviewed journal devoted to augmentative communication and is highly regarded for its quality. AAC is now available on CD-ROM (1985-1997.) Many said they appreciate AAC’s growing international focus and expanding appeal to a broader audience.

Respondents also rely on many other journals that apply directly or indirectly to their work:

American, British and Canadian Journals of Speech-Language Pathology; Aphasiology; Child Development; International Journal of Rehabilitation Research; Journal of Communication Disorders; Journal of Child Language; Journal of Educational Technology; Journal of Intellectual Disability Research; Journal of Speech and Hearing Research; Language, Speech and Hearing Services in the Schools; Logopedics, Phoniatrics, Vocology; Seminars in Speech and Language; Topics in Language Disorders and many others.


Those surveyed also value AAC textbooks. Nearly everyone mentioned Beukelman and Mirenda’s text (1998 edition). “It’s our most comprehensive resource.” See Table II for others noted. Finally, many emphasized the importance of books written by or about AAC users e.g., “*I Raise my Eyes to Say Yes*”⁵ as resources for students, families and professionals. 

Table II. Texts listed as resources by those surveyed

Beukelman, D. & Mirenda, P. (1998)	<i>Augmentative and alternative communication: Management of severe communication disorders in children and adults.</i> ¹
Lloyd, L., Fuller, D. & Arvidson, H. (Eds.) (1997)	<i>Augmentative and alternative communication: A handbook of principles and practices.</i> ²
von Tetzchner, S. & Jensen, M. H. (Eds.) (1997)	<i>Augmentative and alternative communication. European perspectives.</i> ³
Glennen, S. & DeCoste, D. (1997)	<i>The handbook of augmentative and alternative communication.</i> ⁴
Adamson, L. & Romski, M. A. (Eds.). (1997)	<i>Communication and language acquisition. Discoveries from atypical development.</i> ¹
Light, J. & Binger, C. (1998)	<i>Building communicative competence with individuals who use AAC.</i> ¹
Romski, M.A. & Sevcik, R. (1997)	<i>Breaking the speech barrier.</i> ¹
Siegel-Causey, E. & Guess, D. (1988)	<i>Enhancing nonsymbolic communication among learners with severe disabilities.</i> ¹
Reichle, J. & Wacker, D. (Eds.) (1993)	<i>Communication alternatives to challenging behavior: Integrating functional assessment and intervention strategies.</i> ¹
Johnson, J., Baumgart, D., Helmstetter, E. & Curry, C. (1996)	<i>Augmenting basic communication in natural contexts.</i> ¹
Wetherby, A., Warren, S. & Reichle, J. (1998)	<i>Transitions in prelinguistic communication.</i> ¹
Yorkston, K., Miller, R. & Strand, E. (1995)	<i>Management of speech and swallowing disorders in degenerative disease.</i> ⁵

¹ Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

² Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon

⁵ San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation

³ London: Whurr Publishers

⁴ San Diego: Singular Publishing Group

Governmental



ISAAC

Founded in 1983 by a small group of individuals from a handful of countries, the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) has over 2800 members from 48 countries. Most ISAAC members now join through one of ISAAC's eleven national chapters:

ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-Denmark, ISAAC-Finland, ISAAC-GSC (German Speaking), ISAAC-Ireland, ISAAC-Israel, ISAAC-NF (Netherlands/Flanders), ISAAC-Norway, ISAAC-UK (Communication Matters), ISAAC-Sweden and USSAAC (US Chapter).

ISAAC and its chapters are key players in influencing governments, decision-makers and the general public by raising the profile of AAC and its potential for changing lives. Depending on the local or national situation, the goal may be to make AAC services and products available through government programs, create legislation that mandates education and employment for AAC users or simply raise the awareness of the abilities of AAC users.

In addition to their advocacy roles, ISAAC and its chapters facilitate the global exchange of information about AAC through publications, videos, conferences and its Website. Nancy Christie, ISAAC's executive director, said,

"The combination of these activities are important in creating an environment that welcomes and supports people with communication impairments to be independent and contributing members of our communities."

Working together as an international network, ISAAC's information dissemination in AAC is based on a recognition that research and best practices carried out in one area

have universal applications. Also, practical solutions, as modified by different cultures, often are useful irrespective of the source of the knowledge or technology.

ISAAC is working to enhance easy access to information resources in AAC. It's members hold conferences and publish articles, books and chapter newsletters in more than twelve different languages. Current ISAAC products include:

ISAAC Website. Free access to information and opportunities for members to form/join chat groups.

AAC Journal. Member subscription \$55 US. Non-members \$99 US.

AAC Journal CD- ROM. (1985 to 1997). Members \$25 US. Non-members \$99 US.

ISAAC Research Symposium Proceedings 1990 (Stockholm), 1992 (Philadelphia), 1994 (Maastricht), 1996

(Vancouver) \$20 US. Note: The 1998 Research book *AAC: New directions in research and practice*, edited by Filip Loncker, John Clibbens & Lyle Lloyd, will be available August, 1999.

Biennial Conference Proceedings 1992 (Philadelphia), 1994 (Maastricht), 1996 (Vancouver) \$25 US, 1998 (Dublin) \$30 US.

The Bulletin. Quarterly newsletter. Free to all members.

ISAAC Series #1: Communication Without Speech: AAC Around the World. Anne Warrick (author). Members \$18 US. Non-members \$23 US.

ISAAC Video: In Other Words. \$30 US. Available in VHS and PAL formats.

Affiliated Publications: *Communicating Together*; *Communication Matters* and *The Annual Journal (in Hebrew)*.

For information, contact, ISAAC, 49 One Donway West, Suite 308, Toronto, ON M3C 3M9 Canada. 416-385-0352 (fax); 416-385-0351 (phone); http://www.isaac_online.org (Website); isaac_mail@mail.cepp.org (email)



Equipment



AAC devices

From the early 1980s, AAC manufacturers have taken a leadership role in providing educational experiences and training for adults at all stages of learning. Today, AAC companies offer a multitude of resources that support their products and the people who use them (both consumers and professionals). In addition, AAC manufacturers often advocate for greater access to augmentative devices and services. Respondents cited these resources:

Toll free numbers. Free access to information (in certain areas).

Conference exhibits. Opportunities to view AAC products and talk with manufacturers.

Manufacturer reps. Local access to AAC products and expertise. A chance to "try before you buy."

Workshops. Access to in-depth information about products, materials, and how to use devices with different AAC user groups.

Catalogs: Easy access to up-to-date information about products and pricing.

Trade shows: Focused opportunities to learn about AAC devices. Note: Many people mentioned the Communication Aid Manufacturer's Association (CAMA) "road shows" in North America.

Websites: Current data and easy access to information about devices, training opportunities, and so on. Most manufacturers have Websites. In addition, check out the following sites which link to AAC manufacturers:

University of Nebraska: <http://aac.unl.edu/aac.html>

Trace Center: <http://trace.wisc.edu>

ISAAC: http://www.isaac_online.org



On the Web



ACOLUG resource is its archive and index of all messages posted. To view this, go to <http://listserv.templ.edu/archives/acolug.html>

ACOLUG

A powerful tool of the fast-growing AAC consumer movement is ACOLUG, the brainchild of Graciela Slesaransky-Poe at the Institute on Disabilities/UAP, Temple University. ACOLUG is a listserv, *i.e.*, a discussion group through e-mail, and “a place where people who use AAC have the time and space they need to discuss issues they consider important.”⁸ Currently 375 people from 10 countries subscribe. About 50 are active participants. They include people of all ages who use AAC, friends, family members, professionals, manufacturers and students. It is estimated that a majority of subscribers (85%) are “lurkers,” *i.e.*, they read the messages posted, but remain silent. Reasons given for lurking are:

“I’m learning a lot from the consumer interactions.” “I just want to learn.” I want to study the dynamics of communication.” “I feel like I don’t have anything smart to say.”⁸

Approximately 150 messages are posted monthly on ACOLUG.

ACOLUG is uncensored, however, certain protocols have emerged (*e.g.*, no selling products). Examples of topics discussed are: Personal experiences, managing personal assistance services, characteristics of specific devices, technical assistance, AAC resources, referrals, the effect of AAC devices on speech production and ways to connect with other AAC users.

The Institute on Disabilities, under the direction of Diane Bryen, supports ACOLUG. Listserv participants do not have to pay in order to participate. Another

“How to” instructions for ACOLUG


To subscribe, send email to listserv@LISTSERV.TEMPLE.EDU
Subject line: Leave it blank
Body of message: Type **SUB ACOLUG** and your name. Send it.

When you receive a response, respond as follows. Subject line: Do not alter.
Body of message: type the letters **OK**. Send. You will be notified that you have subscribed successfully and will begin receiving mail

To send e-mail to the ACOLUG list, send to: ACOLUG@LISTSERV.TEMPLE.EDU
Subject line: Identify your topic
Body of message: Type your message and send. The message will be automatically distributed to the list’s subscribers.

To sign off ACOLUG (Do this if you go away for a short period, or no longer want to subscribe). Send email to listserv@LISTSERV.TEMPLE.EDU Body of message: Type **SIGNOFF ACOLUG**. When you receive a confirmation request message, type the letters **OK**. [Don’t include the text of the message.] Send.

If you get an error message, send the error message to help@temple.edu with a note.

For more information, check out ACOLUG’s Webpage at <http://nimbus.ocis.temple.edu/~kcohen/listserv/homeacolug.html> OR contact ACOLUG administrator Graciela Slesaransky-Poe at Graciela@ASTRO.temple.edu, Institute on Disabilities/UAP, Temple University, 423 Ritter Annex, Philadelphia, PA 19122. 215-204-1356 (phone); 215-204-6336 (fax). 

Your Resources

These people graciously responded to my e-mail about resources. Obviously, all surveyed use e-mail. I relied primarily on ISAAC Board members because members of chapters and nonchapters from around the world elect them. Thanks to:

Karen Bloomsburg (Australia); Bjorn Falck (Norway); Massimo Ferrario (Italy); Melanie Fried-Oken (USA); Terry Gandell (Canada); Mary Ann Glicksman (USA); Ovetta Harris (USA); Rick Hohn (USA); Ann Hynes (Ireland); Hilary Johnson (Australia); Terry Johnson (USA); Filip Loncke (Netherlands); John McCarthy (USA); Shirley McNaughton (Canada); Pat Mirinda (Canada); Penny Parnes (Canada); Charity Rowland (USA); Mary Ann Ronski (USA); Judy Seligman-Wine (Israel); Sheela Stuart (USA); Ann Sutton (Canada).

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- 7 Nancy Christie. (September, 1998). Personal communication.
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Author: Sarah W. Blackstone
Technical Editor: Carole Krezman
Managing Editor: Harvey Pressman
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Institutions, libraries, schools, hospitals, *etc.*: U.S. & Canada=\$75 U.S.; Overseas = \$88 U.S.
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