For Consumers

Four Stages of Knowing: A Paradigm for AAC Information Exchange

Clinical News

Resources for Clinicians

University & Research

Journals and Books

Governmental

International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Equipment

AAC devices

On the Web

ACOLUG: Listserv for AAC users

For Consumers

Four Stages of Knowing

The Stages of Knowing 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 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:

Continued on page 2

Continued on page 2

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.”

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...
For Consumers, Continued from page 1

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 augmentative 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.”

Upfront, Continued from page 1

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.

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
decisions that benefit AAC users. A 1997 Report to the Minnesota State Legislature is a good example. 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

*Continued on page 4*
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

**Clinical News**

**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.)

**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.)

**Therapy Materials**

Mayer-Johnson’s Boardmaker was mentioned most often as a useful therapy resource. 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.

---

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Available from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visions on video: Growing up capable</strong></td>
<td>Video. Shows basic applications of AT, simple technology in playetc. Good</td>
<td>AbleNet, Inc, 1081 10th Avenue, SE, Minneapolis, MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for teaching.</td>
<td>55414. 800-322-0956; <a href="http://www.ablenetinc.com">http://www.ablenetinc.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Other Words</strong></td>
<td>Video Depicts a broad range of people using AAC in real environments.</td>
<td>Pyramid Educ. Consultants, 226 W. Park Place, #1,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE Centre/ISAAC</td>
<td>Filmed in the UK. Easily dubbed into other languages.</td>
<td>Newark, DE 19711, 888-732-7462 (phone);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.pecs.com">http://www.pecs.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Picture Exchange Communication System</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video and print materials.</strong> An overview of PECS. Discusses rationale.</td>
<td>Hamony Place Support Services, 132 Railside Rd, #6,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about social review, social stories, comic strip conversations strategies.</td>
<td>(fax); <a href="mailto:haans@interhop.net">haans@interhop.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicating Matters</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video and manual.</strong> Shows how to train personal attendants to work.</td>
<td>Future Horizons, Inc., 720 N. Fielder Rd., Arlington,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>Also, <em>See What We Say</em> is a practical tool for community living.</td>
<td>TX 76012, 800-498-0727 (phone); 817-277-2270 (fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.onramp.net/autism">www.onramp.net/autism</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Social Skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video, stories &amp; materials.</strong> Video explains rationale for teaching</td>
<td>Psychological Corporation, PO Box 839954, San Antonio,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about social review, social stories, comic strip conversations strategies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engineering Environments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Books, displays, CD-ROM:</strong> Engineering the preschool environment and</td>
<td>Mayer-Johnson, Co., PO Box 1579 Solana Beach, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goossens’, Crain &amp; Elder</td>
<td>training environments for interactive augmentative communication. These</td>
<td>92075. 619-550-0084 (phone); 619-550-0449 (fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>books are highly regarded resources.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mayer-johnson.com">http://www.mayer-johnson.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Like a long battle</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video.</strong> A highly effective video that tells the stories of a number of</td>
<td>ISAA-ISAAC-ISRAEL, c/o J. Seligman-Wine, PO Box 400012,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAAC-ISRAEL</td>
<td>people who use AAC and addresses a range of issues. English subtitles.</td>
<td>Mevasseret Zion 90805 Israel +972 2 5340581 (fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PrAACtically Speaking Johnson</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video and booklet.</strong> Shows adults using schedule boxes, conversation</td>
<td>Functional Communication Outreach Service, 705 Geelong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>books, community request cards and objects to augment comprehension.</td>
<td>Rd., Brooklyn VIC, 3025 Australia, 03 9314 9825 (fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building communicative competence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Book.</strong> A practical, step-by-step, research based approach to teaching</td>
<td>Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., PO Box, 10624,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light &amp; Binger</td>
<td>people who use AAC to develop competencies in face-to-face communication.</td>
<td>Baltimore, MD 21285; <a href="http://www.pbrokes.com">http://www.pbrokes.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes and strategies towards AAC</strong></td>
<td><strong>Manual.</strong> A training package for AAC users and carers that teaches</td>
<td>Communication Matters, c/o ACE Centre, Omered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphy and Scott</td>
<td>advocacy skills. Useful in conducting workshops. Developed by ISAA-UK.</td>
<td>School, Waynflete Rd, Headington, Oxford, OX3 8DD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>England. +44 870-6065463 (fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quick &amp; easy ideas for home &amp; classroom</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video and book with displays.</strong> Practical guide to using symbols at</td>
<td>Creative Communication Solutions, 8516 W. Lake Mead,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rouse and Katera</td>
<td>home and in the classroom. For families and professionals. Shows how home</td>
<td>Suite 196, Las Vegas, NV 89128. 702-385-6016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and home activities can be adapted to meet each child’s communication needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tangible Symbols Systems</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video and print materials.</strong> Shows instructional strategies conducted in</td>
<td>Psychological Corporation, PO Box 839954, San Antonio,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland &amp; Schweigert</td>
<td>&quot;real live” classrooms with a variety of children who use tangible symbols.</td>
<td>TX 78283. 800-211-8378. <a href="http://www.hbtpc.com">www.hbtpc.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talk is Not a Four Letter Word</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video.</strong> Outdated (1985), but &quot;makes several good points.&quot;</td>
<td>ASHA, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>301-897-5700; <a href="http://www.asha.org">www.asha.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BlissCom</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video.</strong> Shows kids using technology. Good intro to Bliss &amp; technology.</td>
<td>Blissymbols Communication Int., 1630 Lawrence Ave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Outdated but still works.&quot;</td>
<td>West, #104, Toronto, Ontario M6L 1C6, Canada. 416-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>244-6543 (fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing Communication</strong></td>
<td><strong>Video and manual.</strong> Strategies for communicative interaction between</td>
<td>BC Rehabilitation Centre, 4255 Laurel Street,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>aided and unaided speakers. A bit outdated.</td>
<td>Vancouver, V5Z 2G9, 604-737-6224 (phone)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on page 6
**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.

**Table II. Texts listed as resources by those surveyed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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” as resources for students, families and professionals.

**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.
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 is 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.


**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.


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](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.

**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](http://aac.unl.edu/aac.html)

**Trace Center:** [http://trace.wisc.edu](http://trace.wisc.edu)

**ISAAC:** [http://www.isaac_online.org](http://www.isaac_online.org)
ACOLUG resource is its archive and index of all messages posted. To view this, go to http://listserv.temple.edu/archives/acolug.html

“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
Subject line: Type SIGOFF 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.oics.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).

On the Web

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.”

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.”

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

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 Ferrari (Italy); Melanie Fried-Oken (USA); Terry Gandell (Canada); Mary Ann Glickman (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 Miranda (Canada); Penny Parres (Canada); Charity Rowland (USA); Mary Ann Romski (USA); Judy Seligman-Wine (Israel); Sheela Stuart (USA); Ann Sutton (Canada).

References

1 Shirley McNaughton (October, 1998). Personal communication.
4 Imagine spending a day with your mouth taped shut. Funding augmentative and alternative communication systems: Report to the 1997 Minnesota State Legislature. STAR Program, Minnesota Governor’s Advisory Council on Technology for People with Disabilities, MInn Dept of Admin.
6 Mayer-Johnson Co., P.O. Box 1579, Solana Beach, CA 92075. 619-550-0449 (FAX) http://www.mayer-johnson.com
7 Nancy Christie. (September, 1998). Personal communication.
8 Graciela Slearansky-Poe (September/October, 1998). Personal communication.