

**Anita Heward**

**DIRECTOR**  
**Dill Faulkes Educational Trust**



**EDUCATION**

GCSE: Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, English Literature, English Language, French, Spanish and Geography  
A-Level: Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Biology  
BSc: Physics and Space Science  
MSc: Earth Observation Science  
PGDip: Science Communication  
MA: Creative Writing

**CAREER**

1998-2001: National Space Centre – Exhibition Development, Curator and Exhibition Manager  
2001-Present: Freelance/project work for clients including EXPLORE, Europlanet, the Royal Astronomical Society, Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), Google Lunar XPRIZE, VolitionRX, UCL, the Open University and University of Kent.

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

I wanted to be a ski instructor!

**What are the main things you do each day?**

I work on a number of different projects, each including many different activities, so no two days are exactly the same. I spend a lot of time on Zoom talking to people around the world. I also spend a lot of time editing material from different sources to make funding proposals, articles or press releases that are coherent and understandable for non-experts.

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

I get to work on many different topics, right across the spectrum of planetary science research, and interact with many people with diverse perspectives and backgrounds. In the past year or so, I have been very focused on thinking about strategy and sustainability for various activities – essentially how can we turn projects that have been funded through grants into businesses and services that people will pay for. This has been very interesting, though very demanding. I like least the fact that I work on project with deadlines that I have little control over. Urgent things come up, often with very little warning, that I just have to deal with. This makes it very hard to manage my time and to take time off.

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

I did a creative writing MA part time from 2010-2012 where I had to deliver a draft of a novel. I never had time to follow up with trying to get it published, although many of my course-mates are now onto their third or fourth book. I feel that the world of science is very misleadingly portrayed generally in fiction, TV and film and this is a real problem for public engagement and trust in science. I want to write entertaining, fast paced books that are set in a world that reflects how science and space missions are actually carried out.

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

I was a very quiet and shy child and I think I would have been astonished to know that I'd ended up in a career in communications, sometimes having to give talks in front of hundreds of people. I would tell myself that listening is an underrated skill. Don't worry if you don't feel you have much to say a lot of the time, so long as you listen, think things through and have the confidence to speak up when you have ideas to contribute.

**NATIONALITY:** British

**CURRENT LOCATION:** Surrey, UK

**EXPLORE Project Role:**

**COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER**



**Nick Cox**

**Research Engineer  
ACRI-ST**



**EDUCATION**

MSc in physics & astrophysics  
PhD in astrophysics (2006)

**CAREER**

ESA Research Fellow at European Space Astronomy Centre (2007-2010)  
Researcher for Herschel space mission at KU Leuven (2010-2014)  
Researcher for the Nanocosmos project at University Paul Sabatier/CNRS (2015-2016)  
Research & Development Engineer at ACRI-ST (2017-current)

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

Already then, I was not very decided on what I wanted to be, and several professions caught my fancy, from being a chartered accountant (I liked numbers), an astronaut (the night sky was fascinating) to being a professional brick builder (the Danish kind of brick).

**What are the main things you do each day?**

I work mostly in the office, but I get to travel several times a year for project meetings or conferences (even though many meetings are now held online). Each day I typically spend some time to read and write emails, and do some admin. The larger part of the day I work on project tasks – with usually two or more projects running in parallel. Typical tasks are coding, data processing and analysis, writing and reviewing documents and articles, reading papers, preparing and holding meetings with colleagues, project partners and students.

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

It is very gratifying to work on a code and, after many mistakes, make it work. I also like the travel part of the job, to see new cities and places, and meet colleagues/friends from all over the world. As a researcher / R&D engineer I'm continuously researching and learning new ideas and topics.

One of things that can be sometimes frustrating as a project manager is to need to chase people to answer questions or deliver inputs (but of course for the EXPLORE project this is never needed with all those amazing partners in the consortium).

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

For EXPLORE one of our ambitions is to further exploit the science platform we developed and to improve and create new scientific apps. Also, I'd like to create a start-up someday.

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

Follow your heart, but don't entirely ignore your brain, to learn and work on what you find most interesting. Don't be afraid of change, dreams evolve with time.

**NATIONALITY:** Dutch

**CURRENT LOCATION:** Toulouse, France

**EXPLORE Project Role:**

**Project Manager**



**Giacomo Nodjoui**

**PhD Student  
Constructor University, Bremen**



**EDUCATION**

Bachelor in Geology  
Master's in engineering Geology and Risk Assessment  
PhD Student in Planetary Sciences

**CAREER**

MsC in Engineering Geology (2016-2019)  
Junior Remote Sensing Analyst (2019-2020)  
PhD Student in planetary sciences (2020-Present)

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

Space game developer, professional bass player, fighter jet pilot/astronaut, I had too many different interests and dreams.

**What was your favourite subject at school?**

Natural Sciences and informatics were the most interesting for me, but I enjoyed also chemistry and English while I really disliked “humanities”, now I regret to not be more interested in those fields.

**Have you had a mentor or person that inspired you? How did they help you?**

No one in particular, maybe Baden-Powell (founder of the Scout Movement) inspired me in my “youth days”, but since then I'd say that any person that I met, lived with, or worked with, left me some sort of lesson which helped me grow up in different aspects of my life. One of Baden-Powell's mottos, 'Estote Parati,' which translates to 'Be Prepared' in English, inspired me to be ready for everyday challenges. Additionally, a point of the Scout Law, 'A scout's duty is to be useful and to help others,' motivated me to strive to be a better person.

**What are the main things you do each day?**

Drink coffee, analyse planetary data, develop python tools, read scientific papers, write papers for my PhD, keep updated with trending technologies, and last but not least, drink more coffee!

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

I really like the fact that I am pursuing almost all my passions, even if it can be very stressful and challenging.

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

I would like to continue developing something that may help future generations that wants to join the planetary science community.

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

I know that may sounds a classic answer but “Listen to your mother, think less, enjoy life more, and do more exercises!”

**NATIONALITY:** Italian

**CURRENT LOCATION:** Germany



**EXPLORE Project Role: Co-leader of L-EXPLO and L-HEX SDAs**

**Javier Eduardo  
Suarez Valencia**

**PhD. Candidate in Planetary Science  
Constructor University**



**EDUCATION**

(2021-ongoing) PhD. candidate in Planetary Science, Constructor University, Bremen, Germany.  
(2015-2018) Msc. In Geology, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia.  
(2010-2015) Geologist, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia.

**CAREER**

(2021-ongoing) Researcher, Constructor University, Bremen, Germany.  
(2019-2021) Occasional professor, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia.

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

I wanted to be an astronaut, especially to go to different planets.

**What was your favourite subject at school?**

Biology

**Tell us about your further education?**

Geology. I choose it because there was not an Astronomy program in my country, and geology was still a really interesting natural science, eventually I was able to link the two.

**How did you get your first job? How many jobs have you had since?**

My first job was as a risk management geologist, doing maps for a location in Colombia. Since then, I had two other jobs.

**What's been the biggest piece of luck or 'surprise twist' you have had in your career to date?**

To start my PhD. in Bremen Germany. I always worked in Planetary Science just for passion, but not I can live from it.

**Have you had a mentor or person that inspired you? How did they help you?**

Yes, another Colombian geologist, Fabian Saavedra. He showed me that we can study other planets, while my professor did not have any idea of how to do that.

**What are the main things you do each day?**

Working in my PhD, advising students in Colombia, reading.

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

What I most enjoy is looking at spatial data of planetary surfaces to understand its geology, I do not enjoy debugging code.

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

I want to be a university professor in a Colombian university.

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

The universe is big and full of wonders, no matter what happens do not lose your curiosity to learn from it.

**NATIONALITY:**

**Columbian**

**CURRENT LOCATION:**

**Bremen, Germany**

**EXPLORE Project Role:**

**Researcher at L-EXPL0 and L-HEX.**





**Andree Genot**

**JOB: Project Manager**  
**Affiliation: adwäisEO**



**EDUCATION**

Bachelors in Information and Communications  
Financial Studies Certification

**CAREER**

Project Manager at adwäisEO (2022-2023)  
IT Business Analyst/ Data Specialist/Data Operations - Assistant Director 2017 –2021  
IT Financial Product/Project Manager 2014 –2016  
Quality Control Specialist (IT Financial Products) 2008

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

At the age of 10, I aspired to be either a policeman or a firefighter. This inclination reflected my tomboyish nature and a desire to engage in adventurous and heroic pursuits.

**What was your favourite subject at school?**

I had several favourite subjects in school, including languages, sciences, and history. Each subject appealed to different aspects of my interests and curiosity.

**Have you had a mentor or person that inspired you? How did they help you?**

My father has been a significant inspiration in my life. His support, open-mindedness, interest in languages and cultures, and a balance of ambition and modesty have shaped my values and approach to life and work. His journey from a librarian in a South African Black University to working for the European Central Bank exemplifies the power of determination and adaptability.

**What are the main things you do each day?**

My daily routine involves extensive research, document writing, project follow-ups, and regular participation in meetings. These tasks collectively contribute to the efficiency and progress of my work.

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

The collaborative nature of team projects and the research aspects of my work are what I enjoy the most. On the flip side, certain administrative or routine tasks might be less appealing, but they are essential for the overall success of projects.

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

My aspirations include acquiring more technical training and potentially pursuing further studies to become a Compliance Officer. These ambitions align with my ongoing commitment to professional development and expanding my skill set.

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

I would advise my 10-year-old self to care less about the opinions of others, concentrate on personal growth, and focus on continuous learning. These principles can empower individuals to build a strong foundation for their future endeavours.

**NATIONALITY:**

**Belgian**

**CURRENT LOCATION:**

**Luxembourg**

**EXPLORE Project Role:**

**adwäisEO Project Manager for WP8 and 9**



**Albert Zijlstra**

**JOB Professor of Astrophysics**  
**Affiliation The University of Manchester, UK**



**EDUCATION**  
**CAREER**

PhD

Professor of Astrophysics, The University of Manchester  
Visiting Professor, University of Hong Kong (2016-2022)  
Director Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics (2010-2015)  
Lecturer/Reader, UMIST  
Astronomer, European Southern Observatory  
Research Fellow, South Africa Astronomical Observatory  
PhD student, Netherlands  
Junior Research Fellow, National Radio Astronomy Observatory, USA  
Desk Editor, Elsevier Science Publishers

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

Undecided, I think! I was already very interested in astronomy, perhaps in part because of the Apollo landings but a future job was too far in the future.

**What was your favourite subject at school?**

I studied mainly the sciences. Other topics were dropped as soon as it was allowed. It was required to study at least two languages for the final exams, but that was the only non-science I kept!

**Tell us about your further education?**

I went to the closest university, as the first one from the family to go there. I studied astrophysics. This largely follows the physics curriculum so it was possible to do something I was really interested in without having to worry about employability

**Have you had a mentor or person that inspired you? How did they help you?**

I have learned from several supervisors and colleagues. There isn't a single mentor but every time you move to a new place, you'll find new ways and methods for doing science. It is important to make use of those opportunities and not just keep doing the same things.

**What are the main things you do each day?**

Every day is different. There may be teaching to do, in large lectures, small groups or face to face. There are new papers to read on the latest research and of course there is my own research to work on, almost always in international collaborations. Every day is a learning experience.

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

The work is great. The teaching is rewarding and the research is exciting. On the other hand, the work pressure can be very high and this has become worse since covid. You have to be careful with your mental health

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

Not really. I will see what comes next!

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

Not to worry. Everyone is different and everyone has a place. Just do what you are good at and enjoy!

**NATIONALITY:**

**Dutch**

**CURRENT LOCATION:**

**Manchester**

**EXPLORE Project Role:**

**Lead of the stellar SDA**



Lian Greijn

JOB: Intern

Affiliation: Acri-ST & MSc student Aerospace Engineering at TU Delft



EDUCATION

BSc in Aerospace Engineering

CAREER

### What did you want to be when you were 10?

For a long time, I wanted to become a judge. However, when I was old enough to learn how monotone judicial texts are I quickly abandoned that dream.

### What's been the biggest piece of luck or 'surprise twist' you have had in your career to date?

I was very adamant about going to Toulouse for my internship due to the strong aerospace industry in this city and because I studied French for a semester. It is however quite tough to find a position from abroad especially as a non-native French speaker. I had found an alumnus of my university who worked here and asked if he could help me. He happened to approach my current supervisor at their kid's schoolyard to ask if he would know a position, which is what got me on this project.

### Have you had a mentor or person that inspired you? How did they help you?

I have been inspired by almost everyone I worked with. I think working together on assignments or just discussing problems can really help with thinking outside the box and with motivation in general.

### What are the main things you do each day?

As part of the project, I mostly spend my day programming in Python (and therefore also a lot of time googling issues). I also spend a bit of time working on public outreach, such as editing video tutorials.

### What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?

I really enjoy the required creativity and problem solving that comes with programming. You constantly find a new issue and try to figure out how to solve it. Sometimes tasks seem very daunting at the start, but when you manage to solve it, it is very rewarding.

What I like least is probably that most of the work is done just sitting behind a computer, I would love to move a little more and have a bit more of a change in scenery.

### Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?

Mostly to graduate next year!

### What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?

A bit cliché but I would say to just enjoy life as a kid. I would also tell myself that I am not nearly as bad at maths as I like to make myself believe.

NATIONALITY:

Dutch

CURRENT LOCATION:

Toulouse, France

EXPLORE Project Role:

Intern



# Angelo Pio Rossi

**JOB: Professor of Earth and Planetary Science**  
**Affiliation: Constructor University, Bremen (Germany)**



## EDUCATION

2004 - Ph.D., IRSPS, Univ. Chieti, Italy  
2000 - Degree in Earth Sciences, Univ. Chieti, Italy

## CAREER

2011-present – Constructor University (Bremen, Germany)  
2008-2010 – International Space Science Institute (Bern, Switzerland)  
2005-2008 – European Space Agency (Noordwijk, the Netherlands)

### **What did you want to be when you were 10?**

Oscillating in between a coroner, an archaeologist, and a fossil (or mineral) hunter. I realised later a geologist is a bit of all of them. And medicine was not my thing anyway.

### **What was your favourite subject at school?**

Natural sciences, and later Latin and Earth Sciences. Old dead things, mostly.

### **Have you had a mentor or person that inspired you? How did they help you?**

Yes, very much. I had a few. First and foremost my late palaeontology professor from my undergraduate times: Giovanni Jack Pallini. Then, many years later, the late Johannes Geiss, who was a legend and the funniest and most - gently - iconoclastic scientist I have ever met. And Roger Maurice Bonnet, who is one of the most elegant leaders I recall (plus, decades later, we still chew planetary missions he has made possible). How did they help me? With their example, not only with words. With things adsorbed, and not necessarily realised immediately.

### **What are the main things you do each day?**

Curse my two cats jumping on my laptop while I work, or dipping their paws into my cup of tea.

### **What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

I actually like geology because at the same time it deals with the past, the forgotten the buried, and what happens now, and what might happen in the future. I don't think it is the only discipline to give this multi-scale view of things (spatial, temporal), but it is definitely one of those providing the broadest view.

Regardless geology, since running projects is what I have been done in practice in all those years, what I like is to make things happen.

What do I like least? Dealing with (most) academics, and their terrible time management skills.

### **Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

I prefer to answer to this question next year ;-) But if you really insist: to learn and explore new things.

### **What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

I tried many paths, I messed up a few, and overall, if I look back, at certain junctions where life could have gone one way or another, I realise that I am OK with what I did. I own it, even if it is not the best way according to mainstream metrics. But metrics are a bit of a trap, anyway. There is actually a drawing that I saw a couple of years ago, and I think it is all I would like just to show to my 10 year-old self. Rather sure that he would not get it. And that is fine, too.

**NATIONALITY:** Italian

**CURRENT LOCATION:** Germany



**EXPLORE Project Role:** WP Lead L-EXPLO and L-HEX SDAs



Iain McDonald

JOB Research Fellow, University of Manchester  
Affiliation



EDUCATION

PhD (Keele 2009), MSc (Manchester 2005), MSci (St. Andrews 2004)

CAREER

Research Fellow/PDRA, University of Manchester (2009-2024)  
Lecturer, Open University (2020-2023)

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

I didn't really have a clue, but I'd just learned to programme and I guessed it would involve computers.

**What was your favourite subject at school?**

Unsurprisingly, physics!

**Have you had a mentor or person that inspired you? How did they help you?**

I owe a great debt of gratitude to too many people to mention by name. Whether that's been someone who has proof-read my latest fellowship proposal, or someone who has sorted out my travel problems when I'm stuck in another country, or being taught how to correctly deal with liquid nitrogen or read an autocue. I am grateful to work in a very friendly community who are supportive of each other.

**What are the main things you do each day?**

Poke computers until they do what I want them to. That might be programming a new form of analysis, making plots to examine data, or writing papers.

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

The best part of my job are still the occasional times I get to spend the night observing on top of some remote mountaintop in an exciting part of the world. More often, I still get excited about looking through a fresh set of data and seeing parts of how the Universe works that no-one has seen before. The worst part is needing the patience to analyse this new data rigorously – I always want to write up my papers quickly at tell the world what I've found.

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

There are so many different things I would like to do but don't have the time for. There are many details of the Universe that I would like to uncover, I would like to create a better model for how humans have migrated across the globe, I'd like to climb every mountain, learn to play the clarinet and buy a farm of my own. But the most important thing I will do over the next few years is bring up a family!

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

Push yourself to try more things and get better at them. The more things you try, the more things you'll like, and you never know when those things will become useful to you in the future. And don't be so hard on the people who tell you to do your homework – they really do have your best interests at heart!

NATIONALITY: British

CURRENT LOCATION: Scotland

EXPLORE Project Role: S-Phot lead developer



**Vix Southgate**

**JOB: Creative Communication and VIP Manager**  
**Affiliation: Vixen UK (& DEFT)**



**EDUCATION**

GCSEs: Maths, Eng Lang, Eng Lit, French, Spanish, History, Art, Chemistry, Physics.  
BTEC ND: General Art & Design and A-Levels: Art  
BTEC HND: Historic Decorative Crafts  
YHAFE: Teacher Training

**CAREER**

Self employed: (1996-present) Inc: bespoke woodwork; stately home restoration; theatre, TV & film production design; painting and decorating; graphic design; signwriting; motorbike repair & custom paint jobs; church restoration; woodwork; antique restoration; author & illustrator of childrens books; publishing; editing; marketing & PR; creative communications; business & design consultancy; events coordination; VIP management & scheduling; et al.  
Capital One: (2000-2002) Customer service; creative communications; magazine editor; incentives manager.

**What did you want to be when you were 10?**

Aged 10, I was being bullied at junior school and, as a result, my interest in education was non-existent, my future hopes were merely to survive. I dreamed of being famous - but I'm glad I didn't take the role I was offered, in Coronation Street, aged 15. I never really knew what I wanted to be - still don't - but it's been an amazing adventure so far!

**Tell us about your further education?**

I did not do a degree, but left school after GCSEs and went to Art College BTEC ND (National Diploma) in general art and design and photography; then went on to a BTEC HND (Higher National Diploma) in Historic Decorative Crafts. To my surprise, it also had an element on Chemistry, in the form of paint technology, which I enjoyed, and even though my science results at GCSE were dreadful, I excelled at this, as it was relevant and interesting.

**What are the main things you do each day?**

Each day is different. There are the usual admin, prioritising tasks, email, social media, etc and sometimes I am doing research for a book or article, or proofreading, editing, designing graphics or logos, or following-up regarding events or potential leads (future work).

Networking and keeping in touch with my connections is also high on my every-day to do list.

**What do you like best about the work that you do and what do you like least?**

I love the variety of jobs I do and the great potential to move in any direction I want to. I have the flexibility to follow new paths -and the unknown is so exciting, and terrifying!

I dislike the uncertainty of where the next contract or payment is coming from, but something always comes along if I put the effort in.

**Do you have ambitions or things that you would like to do next?**

I have so many dreams and projects that I have started and want to finish, but my main ambition is to continue to make a difference and support future generations.

**What advice would you give your 10-year-old self?**

I would not change the advice I gave myself; 'you will be fine!' Focus on the positives of each day and leave the negativity behind. Surround yourself with people that support you and celebrate your successes with you (not those who try to bring you down). Every new day is a new opportunity to learn and succeed, but also 'do not fear failure' it is through failing that I have learned the most and found my greatest successes!

**NATIONALITY:**

**British**

**CURRENT LOCATION:**

**Derbyshire, UK**

**EXPLORE Project Role:**

**Communication Support**

