William Stewart, PhD

worldbuilding | co-creation & ideation | research & facilitation

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profile

I am a researcher and facilitator who uses storytelling and worldbuilding to help people explore uncertainty and technological change, navigate complexity and make complex ideas tangible. My experience spans research leadership, military and diplomatic service, teaching, public engagement and independent consulting. I bring together evidence and different stakeholder perspectives to design workshops, frameworks and practical materials that support discussion, collaboration and action.

relevant experience

Speculative Worlds Research Collective | London | 2022-Present

Co-Founder and Director

- Co-founded and lead a 30-person interdisciplinary network across six universities, bringing together researchers, artists, facilitators and external partners around a shared purpose and multi-year body of work.
- Manage a £10,500 budget, with responsibility for funding, supplier and event costs, schedules, partnerships, reporting and the quality of the collective's work.
- Design and facilitate collaborative worldbuilding projects with business, civic, academic and creative partners, using research, scenarios and discussion to help participants explore uncertainty, make complex issues tangible and identify possible directions.
- Turn research and participant ideas into workshops, presentations, frameworks, toolkits, exhibitions, films and practitioner publications, shaping each output around a clear story and intended audience.
- Directed the delivery of 10 workshops, three public exhibitions and two practitioner publications, coordinating contributors, logistics, communications and follow-on work across cross-functional teams.

University College London | London | Feb 2026-Present

Visiting Postdoctoral Research Fellow

- Develop a speculative worldbuilding framework for collaborative interdisciplinary research through UCL and Speculative Worlds, translating creative practice into a structured and adaptable research method.
- Design and facilitate workshops for doctoral researchers on worldbuilding, creative methods, research design and academic writing, helping participants explore uncertainty and develop new approaches to complex questions.
- Write a book and related outputs on the US 'space station gap,' examining how orbital imaginaries shape national policy, commercial space ambitions and expectations around future space stations.

University College London | London | 2020-2025

Doctoral Researcher

- Designed and completed a five-year research project examining how the US and Russia used contrasting stories, symbols, technologies and infrastructure to justify and sustain cooperation on the International Space Station despite geopolitical conflict.
- Combined archival research, policy analysis and interviews with current and former NASA-affiliated professionals to explore how organisations with different interests made long-term cooperation possible.
- Developed research into an award-winning journal article, further peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations and public-facing work spanning political geography, international relations and science and technology studies.

Selected Consulting and Advisory Work | UK and US | 2021-2025

Independent Consultant

- Advised a small outdoor business on priorities, team communication and information management, helping translate the founder's ambitions into clearer ways of working.
- Worked with a London academy school to explore its direction for future growth, using collaborative discussion to clarify priorities and possible next steps.
- Advised a London community museum on the development of its events programme, external partnerships and approach to public engagement.

teaching and facilitation

University College London | London | 2021-2026

Postgraduate Teaching Assistant

- Design and deliver narrative-led lectures, seminars, workshops, simulations and public-engagement sessions across seven undergraduate and postgraduate modules, translating complex research into impactful and memorable learning experiences for different audiences.
- Build scenario and crisis exercises that enable participants to explore uncertainty, work through competing perspectives and test possible courses of action.
- Led teaching delivery on a core MSc Geopolitics module during faculty leave, owning session design, facilitation and student support while guiding the cohort through a new video-based assessment format; 100% of submissions passed.
- Continually refine teaching presentations, activities and supporting materials through student and peer feedback, maintaining quality across multiple modules and more than 500 pieces of assessed or reviewed work.

The Brilliant Club | London, Surrey | 2023-Present

Tutor

- Designed and delivered a ten-week university-style course for students underrepresented in higher education, with full ownership of curriculum, facilitation, assessment and feedback.
- Created interactive sessions in which students produced creative interpretations of complex ideas to demonstrate learning objectives, build confidence and develop independent arguments.
- Achieved a 90% assignment-submission rate and measurable improvement across the course; iteratively refined delivery through consistently positive student and partner-school feedback.

professional experience

Insight Global | Washington, DC | Dec 2018-Sep 2019

Intelligence Analyst

- Contributed to a large-scale compliance programme by analysing information across multiple databases and turning complex records into clear, decision-ready reports for US federal and state agencies.
- Increased output from five to as many as 20 reports per day while maintaining accuracy and quality, identifying compliance and public-safety risks that prompted action by partner agencies.

US Mission to the United Nations | New York City | Feb-May 2018

US State Department Graduate Fellow

- Prepared policy analysis, briefings, talking points and meeting materials for the US Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador to the UN, supporting positions on sustainable development, peacebuilding and space governance.
- Represented the US in multilateral negotiations, including as lead delegate in Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean negotiations, synthesising stakeholder positions into policy recommendations.
- Coordinated high-profile diplomatic meetings and public events involving UN officials, industry representatives and civil-society organisations working across water, space, gender and women's rights; contributed to discussions that informed US and UN policy and received public and media attention.

US Air Force | Washington, DC | 2010-2017

Intelligence Analyst and Non-Commissioned Officer

- Led cross-functional teams of three to eight analysts producing intelligence assessments and briefings for senior US and international defence and intelligence leaders in high-pressure operational environments.
- Produced urgent, decision-critical analysis that reached the highest levels of government and informed responses to events receiving significant international attention; played a central analytical role in sensitive, high-profile missions, synthesising complex multi-source and spatial information into strategic assessments and records.
- Managed a $1.5M analyst-training programme and co-designed its curriculum, practical exercises, toolkits and performance measures, reducing onboarding time from six weeks to 20 days.

education

PhD, Human Geography University College London | 2026

- **Thesis:** *More-than-Terrestrial Diplomacy: Modular Politics of the International Space Station*

MSc, Environment, Politics & Society University College London | 2020

MA, International Relations; MA, Managerial Economics University of Oklahoma | 2019

BA, Political Science Oklahoma State University | 2008

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portfolio supplement: selected projects and outputs

Beyond Borders, Beyond Earth 2035 | London | December 2025

Expert working group space-sector worldbuilding workshop

- Designed, produced and facilitated a collaborative workshop in which participants developed stories that might emerge by 2035; created the workshop framework, presentation deck, prompts and small-group activities.
- Outputs included participant-generated future stories and a facilitated synthesis of what those possible futures revealed about present assumptions, tensions and choices across the sector.

Reimagining Anthropocene Futures | London | March-June 2025

Participatory workshop series and public exhibition

- Co-designed and facilitated participatory workshop series funded by UCL Anthropocene including creative sessions for researchers, artists and community participants, translating environmental research into prompts, collaborative making and discussion.
- Outputs included short films, artefacts, public discussions and a final exhibition, including a new collaboration between an artist and an AI neuroscience researcher that was facilitated through and funded by the series.

More-than-Human Space Diplomacy | London, Oxford, The Hague, Online | 2023-2024

Research, publication and public engagement

- Developed a framework explaining how stories, technologies and infrastructure helped sustain US-Russian cooperation on the International Space Station, then adapted it for academic, industry, government, civil-society, student and public audiences.
- Presented the work at Oxford, a space industry and government-focused virtual conference, a public symposium in The Hague and a UCL Leaders expert panel; outputs included an award-winning journal article, a subsequent paper and a series of talks.

Affordance Futurism | London | 2023-2024; forthcoming January 2027

Artist collaboration and illustrated book chapter

- Collaborated with artist Mary Yacoob through UCL's *Off Earth Atlas* project. Yacoob created *Orbital City* (2023) in response to my research, and I wrote a companion text examining geography, technology and imagined urban life beyond Earth.
- The collaboration resulted in the co-authored chapter 'Affordance Futurism' in *Off Earth Atlas: A Guide to the Social Study of Outer Space*.

Speculative Worlds: Interacting with Ideas, Pasts and Futures | London | June 2022

Founding two-day participatory creative methods lab

- Co-designed and delivered a two-day lab using worldbuilding, collaborative making and alternative ways of communicating research.
- Participants created narratives on more-than-human relations and urban navigation, blockchain legacies and social impacts, and empathic communication technologies; the lab generated new collaborations and led directly to the formation of a sustained research network and annual programme of activities reaching over 200 researchers, artists, and civil society stakeholders across the UK.