

Episode 74 - Troy Lambert, Education Lead at Plottr

Emily Einolander 00:21

Welcome to the Hybrid Pub Scout Podcast with Emily Einolander. We're mapping the frontier between traditional and indie publishing and today I'm speaking with Troy Lambert, education lead at Plottr. Plottr is the popular visual book outlining and story Bible software used by nearly 20,000 writers Plottrs and Panthers alike. Plottr lets you easily arrange and rearrange your scenes, plots, and character arcs so you can quickly find your way to the end of your tale. No corkboard required. Welcome Troy.

Troy Lambert 00:56

Thanks and thanks for having me. That's a wonderful introduction of Plottr I love the new corkboard required. I that's really that's really cute. Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself and your role? All right, well, so I'm Troy Lambert. I'm Besides, I'm the education lead a Plottr which means I write words, not code. I teach people how to use Plottr. I didn't create it. But I know a lot about the creation of it. And but I'm also an author. I'm an author of over 30 books now, thanks to my successful nano this year. And nonfiction and fiction along with I've had several ghost writing books too. We won't talk about that be a long story hold different podcasts. But anyway. And so that's kind of me, I live in the mountains of Idaho with my wife and two very talented dogs. Sometimes they write my blog posts for me. And I don't think it shows I don't think there's any difference.

Emily Einolander 01:48

So I used to write horror movie reviews. And I did at least two from the point of view of my dog, because he would react so strongly to them. Oh, that's good. You can have that one. Be like, well, this, this is my dog approved movie. Right?

Troy Lambert 02:07

There you go.

Emily Einolander 02:09

All right. So tell me what the inspiration was for Plottr and how it started out and developed over time, please.

Troy Lambert 02:15

So I'm actually the inspiration for Plottr came from Cameron Sutter, who's the guy who developed it. And he's a writer as well. But he's a software developer by day. And so he developed a software to help him with his own writing, essentially. And he was like, this is something that I need to help organize my writing. But the more people that saw it, they were like, you should sell that. And so he brought it to a Writers Conference in, I believe it was like 2017, something like that. And my friend of mine, and mine and I were there. And my friend said you gotta come to the dealer room and buy the software. And so I

looked at it literally for under five minutes and bought it. Because I was like, Okay, this, I think this could really help me because picturing my office with the aforementioned cork board and white board, and the strings that were pushed pins between notecards. And so I was picturing all this and I'm looking at the software, I'm like, this is a potential solution for me. So I bought it. So I was one of the probably the first 100 people to ever use it besides the owner himself. And then fast forward to 2020. Because he started asking, like, what features would you like? And I was like, Well, now that I have the ear of the developer. And every now and then they you know, you tell them a feature you want they give you the face, you know, the face, the programmers give you that face that says, How am I going to disappoint you and tell you this is really hard, but still keep you as a friend.

Emily Einolander 03:41

That's also an engineer face.

Troy Lambert 03:43

Yeah, it's I call it I call it the resting programmer face. It's just it's, it's well. So anyway, so um, fast forward to 2020 Plottr, we kind of relaunched Ryan Zee came on board. And we started relaunching marketing with obviously the whole idea that if we had more than one developer, if we had an entire team, then we could move much faster and create features that people wanted, because people would ask for features all the time, but it would just it would take a tremendous amount of time for one person to develop these things. So we ramped up our team and they said, Hey, you already do a lot of stuff for Plottr, you want to come on board and help us and I was like, Yeah, sure. And I had no idea what that was going to look like. And you know now I've been doing educationally for the past three years. I make videos, do webinars, do podcasts, write documentation, blog posts, yada yada yada yada, basically based on like, how, like how to use the software.

Emily Einolander 04:40

You'll never need a true detective or Pepe Silvia board ever again is what you're saying,

Troy Lambert 04:46

oh, oh, please. They were it was so bad. And now I have a I have a rather large German Shepherd. I can just picture him like knocking that over and my life just crumbling before my eyes. So Yeah,

Emily Einolander 05:00

like, I can only do this so many times. I know how many revisions I'll do later.

Troy Lambert 05:05

Yeah. Oh, anyway, yeah. Horrible.

Emily Einolander 05:09

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to like bring up a terrible intrusive thought,

Troy Lambert 05:13

Oh, no, I have a therapy session right after this.

Emily Einolander 05:18

Oh, fantastic. All right. Could you give me a general overview of the software, please.

Troy Lambert 05:21

So the software itself, so what it looks like is basically like a cork board, sort of like a digital cork board. So there's things called scene cards, which is basically like your note cards, you can put notes in them. But because it's digital, you can also add tags to them, you can add characters to tag the scenes, which you can then filter your outline by so you can only look at certain things depending upon what you're doing with your writing. And so that you can actually arrange what's called plot lines, which are basically like just a colored line that you put those scene cards on. And you can name those, whatever you want. And you can have as many of them in your project as you like. Now, obviously, I've recommendations for how many you might not want that to be because, you know, things can get rather complex. And while you might have a beautiful Plottr file, that's going to be a difficult book to write, and but anyway, so but then you can arrange your, your structure, whether you're writing scenes, or beats or chapters, you can kind of arrange your structure. And that's kind of the outlining portion of it. There's also an outline view that actually looks like an outline, and you can still edit it and stuff like that exactly like you can with a timeline with the scene cards, but it just looks more like like a linear school outline, tired of a Scrivener sort of sort of sort of a Scrivener ish type thing, which I tried to use Scrivener before we can talk about it. I use it, I use it for writing, I do not use it for plotting and outlining. And there there are many, many reasons for that. But anyway, um, but Potter then the other aspect of it is the series Bible aspect of it, which was one of the very first things that I asked for. And it includes three sections right now we're actually expanding those sections, but one of them is notes. The other is characters and settings. So notes for me is just research anything that's not character setting related, but something I want to know in that book, you know, fantastic case studies of strychnine poisoning, for instance. Not that, you know, I mean, you know, it's yeah, I've got a fascinating thread this chemists wrote on Twitter. But anyway,

Emily Einolander 07:20

Nobody should look at a writer's search history. Let's just leave it at that.

Troy Lambert 07:24

Well, no, actually, I talked to a guy actually, who runs like the program that's like terrorist detection as a service. He said, I can't even tell you the name of the program, but his company invented it. And he said, Trust me, if we figured out that you're searching for how to bludgeon someone to death with a frying pan on the internet, we probably know you have books on Amazon. So you're pretty safe. We can probably figure both of those things. There's price and correlation when we think about that. Anyway, so you know, you want to be really good murder book on Amazon and then search for the ways to anyway. Don't follow that advice.

Emily Einolander 07:57

Double blind, please don't kill anyone. Disclaimer, please see my disclaimer,

Troy Lambert 08:01

Disclaimer, disclaimer here, insert disclaimer here. So your research, but also your characters and your notes, and your settings. But you can arrange those by book like by the book that they're in. So you only have to look at the book that you're working on right now. But if you want to look back and see what color Susie's eyes were in Book Two, you can just do that too. So you can, there's just ways to move back and forth between all those things to visually look at your characters and settings. And that's how I use Plottr when I'm during the writing process. I have Plottr open on one screen and Scrivener open on another. If I need a fact about my character, I look to the other screen, then look back. And so I have this, this ability to see what I need to see without leaving my writing environment, which for me is super important keeps me focused, right? Because I don't know about any other writers, but there's probably some other squirrels out there that notice something shiny in there. When they look back in chapter two to see what color Susie's eyes were. And suddenly I'm on Reddit and Quora and I have no idea how much time has passed. I'm covered in orange Cheeto dust. I haven't written a word on my manuscript. Right? So I mean, get it, you know, what I'm saying is we as writers get distracted, right? My goal is to be as little distracted as possible. And if I am distracted, at least make it my own fault, not the fault of the system that I've set up.

Emily Einolander 09:33

So authors as, as you know, have different approaches to the way they write or get work done. Some are plotting, while others are Pantsers, which I hate that term, but I heard Cameron use discovery writers, which I really liked, but what are some of the ways that different authors can use the software to fit their different writing personalities?

Troy Lambert 09:55

So my argument with Discovery writers is that you do plot you just plot at a different Time. Okay, so there are people who write what I call the zero draft or the discovery draft, I don't count it as a first draft, because what you're essentially doing is you're telling yourself the story and you're writing a very detailed outline. Okay? Yeah, that's really what that draft is this. Now the second time you look at this, hopefully, because this is the most efficient way to do it, is you're going to now plot that out, you're going to look at what you've written, and say, Okay, this is a story. It's probably too long or too short, one of the two depending on if you overwrite, or underwrite. And it's probably fairly disorganized, but it is a story. And now you can see, okay, well, what is the actual inciting incident in the story? Where does the story actually start? And you start to arrange that, that's called plotting. Okay, it's just done later. If you do that, using the guidance of established story structures, and you use a system to do that, what it does is it gives you distance from your writing, summarize each scene, put it on a plotline and then compare it to an established story structure. Now you can check your work and see how you did. How was my first draft? Spoiler alert, it's going to be terrible, no matter how many of them you've written 30. I tell people 30 drafts in write 30 novels and not more than way more than 30 drafts, but 30 novels in right. And then I wrote a horrible first draft, okay, give yourself permission to do that. It doesn't matter. Right, you can always go back and revise it later, your readers never have to read that. So it doesn't make any difference. So just do it. Right? Just write it. Okay. So that's the first thing, but you just write to get that done. And then you go through the revision process of looking at it and checking your work. Because even though I plan ahead of time, I still do that process when I'm done writing, because I go back and check my work. Because oddly enough, even if I plan to write it this way, I didn't write it exactly that way. And I know I may be the only writer who does this, right. But I wander

Emily Einolander

Yeah, just you.

Troy Lambert

Just me, it's only me, right? But I wander. So I go back and check my work. So most of the time, Discovery writers, if they're going to use Plottr, they do a few different ways. Either they kind of plot as they go, they just write their summary of their scenes on a plotline as they go. And then they check their work when they're done. Or they wait until they're done with that draft. And then they just break apart third draft into various different scenes. Now I use this with editing clients, too, if you come to me and one of my editing clients, and you don't have a potter file, by the time I'm done with my first read through you do now. Because then I can point to it visually. Even if you don't have Plottr I can get you on Zoom, share my screen point to it visually and say that is a plot hole. Ah, and literally there, how can you deny that like you're looking at it visually in the hole is literally there? Or I look at it. And I say what is the goal motivation conflict in the scene. It's a scene that you wrote yourself to explain the story to yourself. And that's fantastic. But I didn't need to read it and neither do your readers. So we don't need to go in and correct grammar and punctuation in that. We just toss it out before we do that process, right? Yeah, so I tell people, I most of the time I tell my clients, you need to get Plottr. And the reason is, you will save more money in my time that you're not paying me for then you will spend on Plottr, if I'm going to edit your work for you, because we can work through some of these early stages without ever touching your manuscript. So that we can figure out what do we actually need to edit here and then work on that, then put it in order and then work on that. Rather than doing it the opposite way. It's much more interactive, it's much faster, it's more efficient, but it's more efficient for you as writer to and your initial rewriting process. So there's that. There's also one guy I encountered who plots his novels in chunks, what I call chunk plotting, okay, he plots the first 10,000 words, then kind of knows where he's going at the end of that one. So he plots the next 10,000, and then the next 10,000, and the next 10,000 until he's done at the end. I've met people that plot their work backwards at the end, and then they plot their plot points as they ride along, because it kind of creates a roadmap for them to the end. So they know the end, but they don't know the middle part. But they as they write, they plot that as they go. So they're not pure discovery writers. They're not pure Plottrs. They're kind of that plant stir type people that some people call it, whatever you want to call that particular thing. To me, it's just you plot as you go, you plot as you're working along, which is the way I started, like, initially, I was a discovery writer found out. This is not working really well for me. Because if I don't know where I'm going, I wander even more. So I had to back off of that and plan my last half of my novels. So you know, but that's how I started. That's how I changed.

Emily Einolander 14:53

As someone who mostly worked and works in nonfiction, I definitely need an outline to be able to do anything. Even now that I'm writing more fiction, my brain still works like that. So would you say that this is a good software for a nonfiction writer?

Troy Lambert 15:10

Oh yeah, I've got two nonfiction books planned in it right now you just have to. So we're working on some new templates for that. But you just have to think in different terminology, because nonfiction is still so let's say you're writing historic nonfiction, historical or memoir, it's still a story that still needs a

story structure. People are writing a memoir. That's just a list of events that have happened in your life, for reading this, the spoiler alert. You need to have a theme and you need to have a three Well, yeah, because I'm a ghostwriter. Right, so people approached me that are like, I want you to write my story. And I say, some of them, I say no, I say, come back, when you have a story. You don't have a story. You have a series of interesting events that have happened in your life. But there's no theme. If we look at a commercially successful memoir, there's a theme, you know, I'm working with a guy right now that there is a definite theme. And then we are covering a section of his life. We're not covering his whole life, because not all of his life fits the theme. Right? So we're leaving that part up. So anyway, that's my harp on memoir past that. But nonfiction as well, there's a structure to nonfiction book where you're going to tell people what you're going to tell them, and you're going to explain their problem and pain points. It sounds kind of like the first plot point in a novel little bit, you know, like, here's your problem, and this is what you need to do to solve it. And then the middle part is your journey to solve them. And then at the end, this is this beautiful solution I have helped create for you. That type of thing. So it's still a story. It's a hero's journey, that is a that you're letting the reader create their own hero's journey with a set of instructions, in some ways.

Emily Einolander 16:48

So I wonder how much Donald Miller would charge you to use that template?

Troy Lambert 16:58

Yeah, there are some templates like that there. There are some templates that we have in Plottr that have either been reader suggestions, or the people who created them and said here, you may have it, you may put this in your software, because in a lot of ways, it drives people back to look at the original material, I don't tell you to use the romancing a beat, in Plottr without going and looking at the Romancing The Beat book. Right, right. Because you might get it sort of right. But you're gonna miss some stuff. There's some that you know, same thing with story circle and all those different things is you need to go back to the source material, because that's really where the meat is. We're just giving you a basic guideline, right? So for most people, they're like, Yeah, we want you you can use our template because they understand. I'm going to encourage people to go back and read their original material. I don't want people just, this isn't a replacement for the book. But there are some people that have said, No, you can't use my templates in Plottr and we said, that's fine. It's your material. Thank you very much, right.

Emily Einolander 18:00

So to be specific, there is a place in Plottr, where you can open up a template that will give you either you can write from blank and do everything yourself or you can create it from Romancing the Beat, for example. And there's a big list to choose from. I'm doing the sample. I love this. I'm going to buy it. But yeah, there's little summaries on each of the cards that are here with Romancing the Beat. But yeah, I've noticed that with every template, there's the little icon in the corner, which takes you to the sales page for whatever book or like the blog page for whoever came up with that system.

Troy Lambert 18:39

Yeah, exactly. Well, and you can make your own templates also in Plottr so for example, we cannot have a Save the Cat template, in Plottr because of copyright issues. However, there may be a video on YouTube with a guy named Troy that teaches you how to make your own Save the Cat template.

Emily Einolander 19:02

So she said no.

Troy Lambert 19:05

So well no, actually. So this is really interesting. Jessica Brody is a Plottr user. And I have done a couple different webinars with her recently. Right I'd love Jessica right? But she is not the Save the Cat is Blake Snyder and his descendants, it's their company. So she has an association with them and an agreement with them to write Save the Cat Writes a Novel in her new book that's coming out and loads in the summer which is Saved the Cat Writes a YA Novel, right? That's coming out this summer. So she has an agreement with them to write those books but she does not own the template of Save the cat itself. Okay. So, Jessica cannot give me permission; it has to come from above her pay grade, essentially. But yes, so we are 100% in favor of people creating their own templates for whatever method they would like to use, there's actually a really cool, save the cap method called 15 into 40. If you haven't heard of it, you can go watch my video, you can go look that up on YouTube or whatever you want or not YouTube, the guy has a blog, I think it's a big long blog post about it. But it's called 1515 into 40. And it talks about creating 40 scene cards out of the 15 deeds of Save the cat, so that you balance, it helps you balance your percentages properly of your story. Super cool method, I like it. You know, so it, it's fun. But one of the ones we have is this loose journey, which I created. It's just a modification of the hero's journey for mysteries. I just gave it the Plottr. So, you know, I didn't hold any, you know, great rights over their head or anything like that.

Emily Einolander 20:48

Well, it sounds like you're getting a lot of joy out of this.

Troy Lambert 20:52

Oh, yeah. I get plenty out of it, get plenty of trade out of it. Yeah.

Emily Einolander 20:56

All right. So would you say that people have to spend a lot of time learning the platform before they can actually use it? Or is it something that's easy to just kind of dive into?

Troy Lambert 21:06

No, it's actually fairly easy to dive into. And I tell people just start simple, like, open it up, look at the plotlines and start to put little cards on it, just play with it a little bit. If you want to play with the templates, absolutely. You can you know, whatever you're comfortable with with software, but just allow yourself to kind of ease into it. Start simple and go to complex from there. We have tons of tutorials, tons of videos on YouTube, tons of documentation that'll teach you how to do it. So if you if you're into that type of thing, either reading or videos or whatever you need to go through instructions, there's plenty of instruction. But I also tell people just because of features there doesn't mean you have to use it. So what are some things that are like people create these beautiful Plottr files, and all these

advanced features on them and things like that, right. And that's wonderful, makes my heart happy. But what makes me happier is to see that you find a way to use Plottr as part of your process, and you get your first draft done. So show me your beautiful Plottr file and your finished first draft make me a very, very happy guy, just your Plottr file makes me only so happy until you created a book from it.

Emily Einolander 22:09

It's like people, people meeting me who spend so much time on their to do list when they're wanting to procrastinate. It's like let me make this beautiful outline file here.

Troy Lambert 22:22

This is called plot-crastination, was what I call it. And what it means is, and I often encountered this in book coaching, and here's what's here's what's one of the biggest issues is people are afraid. They're afraid of messing this book up. It's their passion project. And they're terrified that if they start writing it somehow they're going to mess it up. And I tell them, Well, here's the spoiler for you, you are in the first draft, you're gonna mess it up. And it's okay. You just have to be okay with that. And then we can go back and work through it and the second draft. But if you spend two years plotting your novel, first of all, the plot is going to be a mess. And here's why. No matter what you write, no matter what genre you write, almost without exception, there are some exceptions. We won't even talk about them. But most writers write from the heart. Right? Now, if how much has your heart changed? Let's just pretend 2020 actually was a disaster that happened? How much has your heart changed between 2020? And now?

Emily Einolander 23:26

That's a painful question.

Troy Lambert 23:29

I understand that. And I understand it makes people uncomfortable. And I'm actually okay with that. Because it makes me uncomfortable. Yeah, but because it's like, if you're plotting an outline over two years, your heart has changed dramatically over that two years. If you take five years to write a book, your heart has changed dramatically over that five years. So when you go back to edit the first chapter, you're editing something that someone else wrote. Right, right. It's not you anymore. And so some people, they're breaking my heart on it, quite honestly, because there's so many people out there that tell me they have a book in them. And 2% of those people write a book 2% national survey nationals. I will I should preface that with according to a national survey, I'll take your word for that. May or may not be it may not be may or may not be 100% accurate. You know what I mean? But it's very, very, very small, is statistically significant enough to say and the other thing I know is that inevitably you walk into a party and this probably and you say, like what do you do for a living? I'm a writer. I write things for a living. They go, Oh my god, I have this amazing idea for a book. Would you like to write it for me? As if this is just something like you just go? Sure. I'll whip that out for you. No problem. I'll split the royalties with you. 5050 Thanks, man. That That's great. But no, no. And the reason is they feel like they have the story that they need to get out of them. But they have no idea how to get it from here into something that's a novel life. And this is where my, all my preaching about the education that it takes to be a novelist come in. And I don't mean College. In fact, most of the time, I mean, please don't go to college to be a novelist. I don't always talk to MFAs. But I'm when I do I order a venti,

Emily Einolander 25:27

I hate that joke, but like, it's fine.

Troy Lambert 25:33

I know, I hate that joke, too, because in some ways, there are some of the MFA programs that are good. And I don't want to take away from people that have MF A's, and have learned the writing craft extremely well. But usually, you have not learned much about the business of writing unless you have learned that outside of school. And there's a whole rounded education that you need to be a novelist, and you have probably missed part of that. And that's, you may not have an AI. So as much All joking aside, you may not have but you usually are not getting the return on investment from your college degree that you should. And it is through no fault of your own. Right, through no fault of your own. Sometimes people are so you know, but it's, it's it's just kind of it's one of those running jokes, because it's kind of I mean, it's rough. I'm like, you can get this education somewhere else, but you're going to have to work at it. Like there's a large amount of work and education that goes into it.

Emily Einolander 26:25

So there's that long lead time where you're getting better at it, where you're going to make zero money and put in like hours and hours and hours and hours of time.

Troy Lambert 26:33

Yeah. Lots of it. Anyway, okay, so it's easy to use. That was like the wrong round about practice. But it's actually very easy and intuitive to learn and use. And, yeah, like, you can just go in and start playing with it and figure out a lot of it. But if you're, if you have trouble, you're not just digital savvy or whatever, then I mean, there's, there's answers for you. We'll put it that way.

Emily Einolander 26:59

And videos and tutorials. Cool. So how does Plottr interact with Scrivener, for example, or other pieces of software that authors might be using.

Troy Lambert 27:10

So you can export your plot from which is basically gonna come out in outline form from Plottr to Scrivener. And to word either one. So most other writing programs, if you're not using Word, will translate a word file. So that most of the programs out there will take a Word file and you can do whatever you want with it. Although I highly recommend that people become familiar with Word and certain aspects of it because hey, this is the Publishing and Editing industry and that's the standard right now. There are some reasons there are some interesting new software options coming out there that I'm very excited about. But right now that's the standard for editing and publishing is word right because Microsoft okay, but you can export to Scrivener you can also import from Scrivener. Now. Now it has to be in a certain format. To import from Scrivener. If you use the Scrivener novel with parts, it will not import properly because Plottr doesn't know what to do with the parts yet. And again, this is a coding thing. Like I can't tell you why that is, I can just tell you it works that way. So extra important but important and kind of what you're seeing cards won't land where you think where you would like them to land. But if he used a novel template, that's just what chapters or the NaNoWriMo template that came out with this year, those ones will import directly into Plottr and so to import the heading of you're

in the inspector, if you're familiar with Scrivener in the inspector, the heading of that little card and what you've written in there as a summary, it will import those into Plottr. So essentially, when you're done, you can check your work by importing that into Plottr, putting in a plotline. So if you've written your summaries in there, as you go along as you write, then it'll it makes your revision process even easier because you just import the file you've already created. So yeah, that's how it interacts right now there are some other interesting integrations on the horizon. We can't import from Word because Microsoft doesn't share their API with little people like us. So importing from word would be a problem, because somehow we would also have to establish the type of formatting you'd have to use to just import your scene summaries and not your whole document. It would do weird things to Plottr right now,

Emily Einolander 29:29

Selfishly, any plans for Google docs in the future?

Troy Lambert 29:34

I don't think directly. I think it's kind of the docx still the docx transferred to Google Docs, which I'm not. I'm not a huge fan of and I'm not a huge fan of editing and Google Docs simply because of the legacy coding that it leaves when you transfer it back to Word. Yeah, there there are some from from a formatting because I also do formatting and editing from a formatting standpoint. It's and things can get kind of ugly, depending on how you have formatted your Google Doc. So I until but that's partly part of the reason is Microsoft again, like Google Docs does not have a perfect translate to Microsoft Word because Microsoft doesn't let it they don't want you to use Google Docs, they want you to use Word. So there there are some solutions on the horizon. Atticus is one I'm super excited about. I think there's some really cool stuff happening with that, because there's some ways a Plottr can integrate directly with it. And there's some editing options in Atticus that I actually, they're trying to make it very word like in your ability to do edits. And if they do that, they they will have a convert, when they when they reach that level of things, they will have a convert for sure. Because I'm not. Again, this is kind of Microsoft is kind of like Amazon, we're all big fans of the company. But I mean, easy to get embedded. Yes, the gorilla is the gorilla in the room, right? I'm like, I don't like Amazon all that much. But 85% of my royalties come from Amazon. So what are you going to do? Yeah, am I going to text Jeff and say, Hey, man, I don't like your what you're doing right now? No, it's not gonna happen. First of all, I don't have his number. Second of all, I'm way too small fry for that. And it's not going to make any difference, right? So we just live within the ecosystem we're in until a new ecosystem emerges, which there are some exciting ones emerging. That's another whole other thing. So anyway, so that's how a Plottr integrates with software, at least right now. There are plans on the horizon for other ways for it to integrate with software of various types.

Emily Einolander 31:45

Are there any projects where you don't think Plottr would be suitable?

Troy Lambert 31:51

I know I think that is very rare. That would be a very rare instance. In other words, like I tell people short stories. For instance, we have the Lester dent formula is one of our templates. I mean, he said every time he followed that formula, he sold a story, right, whatever story he created with that he sold every single one of them. I believe it is a very simple and very powerful Pulp Fiction formula. And if you think

about Pulp Fiction right now, the pulp that's Kindle Vella and Radish. So welcome everyone to you know, the 1960s for pumping out novels that are selling for a quarter and not making much on them, but if you sell enough of them, you know it anyway. So

Emily Einolander 32:30

I'm complaints about Kindle Vella, but that's also the story.

Troy Lambert 32:35

Yeah, we so yeah, I think come back and we can do an entire podcast on complaints. Well, pros, cons and complaints about Kindle Vella. We could just call it that. And we could spend an hour on it. No big deal. But that's not that's pretty good. Anyway, so but so there are very few projects that I would say just won't work with Plottr. The other thing is that I've used Plottr for all kinds of things. I've made a writing schedule and Plottr. I made a marketing schedule in Plottr, it's a Kanban. Board. I've made an email schedule and Plottr. Yeah. I've just used it as a Kanban. Board. That's not what it is. For those of you who are like listening and you're like, it's a candidate, I can just use Basecamp No, no, no, it's not the same thing. But it's a way that I use it. Okay. Not to confuse anyone but gotcha, you don't worry. Yeah, because you can make the plotline says different things that you do, like, this is my regular email list. This is my book release. This is my promo things that I'm doing this is this. And then you just put your months across the top stack in whatever things that you're doing. And then what I do is I create a set of attributes, custom attributes in that same card that I fill out for each thing that's like my ROI. If I did a email exchange, like how many email subscribers did I get from this exchange, and then I give it a rating that's my own rating system a one to five with a good with a bad and then I can look back at that information.

Emily Einolander 34:02

So you've got all your stories, your schedules and your KPIs in Plottr. Yeah. That's incredible. Okay, well, that's, that's very useful.

Troy Lambert 34:14

I mean, I know it's, it's probably kind of mind blowing to people that look at it initially, but like, I have a role for Plottr in every part of my writing process. Because it's, it's kind of like a Swiss army knife, I can make it if I can make it do what I want for that part of the process than I do that. So I use it for the planning process. I use it during the writing process, and I use it in revision all to make myself more efficient. It's all about efficiency. That's all it is. It's, it's, it's a way to make myself faster and better at what I do. And that's my goal. I mean, you know, so that's it.

Emily Einolander 34:50

So what's like, some of your favorite maybe little easter egg or fun things that Plottr can do? Oh,

Troy Lambert 34:59

so Oh, probably one of my favorites is there's a couple of things that I do when you put it in the outline view, you can actually filter by plotline. So like my latest book teaching moments has two separate plot lines that are very distinct. One of them's kind of a subplot, but it's confession that someone's making. We don't know who it is. We don't know who they're confessing to until the very end. And then the other

one is the straight mystery story, right? But for those two to work together, they had to, like the timing of things had to kind of coincide like inciting incidents to different things. Try fails, things were happening along the way, kind of had to coincide. So I made both of those would Plottr and then they come together at the end. Then what I do is I pop into that outline form and I filter by plotline and I look at one plotline at a time and I spot plot holes in that plotline. So I say if the other plotline did not exist as this plotline makes sense. So you can do that with your characters too. You can put a character plotline there. And you can say, Does this character's arc and journey makes sense? If the rest of the book was not here? Does this part makes sense? If it doesn't? Well, there's probably a few little little things of work that you can do to make that happen. And just make your story better. Like no one may notice that there's a little skip in your character arc there, maybe not. But if you put it in, they will notice because it'll be on the book will feel better to the readers will say they don't know what's wrong, they will just say something feels off about this part of your book, or this part of the book really hit me hard. And but they don't know why that is. But you can conscientiously as a writer do that, especially in the revision process, go through and just make sure you're hitting everything that your reader is going to expect. And they come out and going. That was great. And they don't know why. But you hit all your beat. So that's one of the things I use, I use tags to do that as well on the timeline area. For pacing. I basically I'm honest with myself about each scene, how this pace is slow, fast medium, but I have three slow scenes in a row, you know, when I filter for that, and I'm like, that's not gonna work for a thriller. You know, go fix that and figure it out. So, yeah,

Emily Einolander 37:15

Got it. That is very useful. Tags are just a gift.

Troy Lambert 37:19

Oh, there, I can go on there. So amazing. Because you can do any level of organization you want to add you can do with tags, right, that you haven't added with something else. But using it for things like pacing or for like your editing stage, or different things like that allows you to get a visual viewpoint of like, where am I in this process, or how is my pacing or is you can label proactive and reactive scenes and see what your mix is, you know, whatever the case may be. And it can do some beautiful things for you. Like I say, especially in the revision process, you might have planned all that out ahead of time. But as you're revising, if you tag those things, and you're honest with yourself, you can turn in a much cleaner manuscript to your editor, they're gonna like you more, you're gonna spend less money on the on your editor, and they're gonna want to work with you again. So,

Emily Einolander 38:09

yep. And then that is that is one of the invisible important things when you're writing that you might not think of right away, it's like, Does my editor like me? So what are, what are the goals for Plottr in 2023.

Troy Lambert 38:28

So there's actually there's some cool things coming up. That's like a more advanced rural building type scenario where basically it has more than just characters and settings. But like places to develop your magic system places to put objects, you can do that now in your Notes section, but it's not as as robust as it probably could be. And of course, this is kind of something that, like historical writers and fantasy writers and stuff like that are looking for something that's a little more robust like this. And also the

ability to add a chronological timeline. That's kind of separate from your regular plotlines. So if you're doing historical, even if you jump around in history, you can have something there that tells you the actual order of events that happened, which you could do with any story. But for historical specifically, it's super, super useful. It's useful for some of my mysteries, too. Usually, there's a timeline, there's a timeframe. And if I just know where I'm at on that timeframe, that's useful. So there's all kinds of uses for it. But so those are some of the cooler things coming up probably some more plot templates, as well, as we develop these as we go along. The other thing is we developed a community. So there's a community template feature right now where, let's say you make what you think is the greatest mystery template ever, right? You can put it in that community template section and share it with your friends. You can share so you can share it with other users. And if other users like it enough, I mean, you get all kinds of uploads all kinds of stuff like that, and kind of that. But that's going to develop into more of an actual community. So you don't have to go to Facebook, we have a really active Facebook group, but some people hate the face Berg for the various reasons which not it's another thing I'm not a big fan of, but I'm out there. I'm on there.

Emily Einolander 40:16

Unusable right now.

Troy Lambert 40:19

Yeah, and the Twitter is kind of fun right now. It's fun watching Elon Musk, that \$44 billion on fire.

Emily Einolander 40:26

Oh, but I'm not sure. So much fun and so sad.

Troy Lambert 40:29

Yeah, I'm not sure how long it's gonna be a viable network. But it's fun right now to kind of watch the dumpster fire and wondering what's going to happen next. But yeah, I mean, you know, so anyway, so those are some of the things that are coming. There's probably other things as well, that I don't eat that I may not even know about. But one of my goals for Plottr always is. So as the educational you don't want to teach people how to use Plottr right. But this is a writing tool. It's a tool that is in your toolbox to enable you to write. So as I've said before, I want you to finish your first draft. And the way you do that is you find what I call your end then. So if you go to YouTube, and you go to the there's a YouTube channel on our YouTube channel called Thursdays with Troy, country interviews by guy named Troy that happened on Thursdays stretch, I know stretch today. But that's today is a stretch, right? But there's all kinds of interviews of authors, right. But the most important words they use in those interviews, it's and then they say, I started with this in Plottr, and then I started with this template. And then the and then is how you personalized it and made it work for you. The most important words you will ever say with Plottr when you talk to me is and then you come up to me at a conference or whatever, say Troy, I started with this and Plottr. And then And here's my finished manuscript that will make me happier than anything. So my goal for the next year is just help more and more people find their and then whatever that looks like.

Emily Einolander 41:59

And then you told us where you were on the internet for us to find you.

Troy Lambert 42:07

So sorry. No, no, that was good. That was good. This whole thing is good. But anyway, yeah, so the easiest way to find Plottr is obviously start with our website www.Plottr.com. Plottr.com Plottr Pol, plottr.com Plottr Pol, plottr.com. I can't even spell it right and like Plottr with no E Plottr with no E, right? So yeah, go to Plottr.com. But you can look for us on YouTube, you look for us on Facebook, you can find me i Tell me if you want to find my stuff. Troy Lambert writes.com or just Google Troy Lambert. And if I don't come up, your internet services down, and you need to get that fixed. And then once Google comes back up again, and it's working, you will find me by typing my name into Google.

Emily Einolander 42:58

You've worked very hard on that SEO, and you should reap the benefits.

Troy Lambert 43:03

I'm actually teaching a class about author SEO in February. But anyway, that's a whole different, pretty commercial, but a whole different story. But um, yeah, so you know, I mean, I'm all over the place all over the web. So if you can't find me, or you're probably spelling my name wrong, or not looking or something like that, so. But yeah, and same thing with Plottr actually, I mean, we're all over the place. We've been on all kinds of podcasts and stuff like that. But if you start with our website, that's the easiest way to, to get started with the software. There's the free trial version that you were talking about. We also have a 30 day money back guarantee, if you if you tried Plottr and you just hate it for whatever reason, first of all, tell us why you hated it, because we'd love to know, so we can try to work on that. And then or maybe it's just not the right software for you that it is it is actually possible that it's not going to work for everyone. But I know that's an amazing fact. But

Emily Einolander 43:52

it's very brave of you to admit that it

Troy Lambert 43:55

Yeah, I mean, it's a tool, right? It's a tool. And so it's not for everyone, but I mean, try it for 30 days, if you don't like Just email support a Plottr.com say, Hey, man, they're gunning for let me totally astray. I want my money back. We're happy to do that. You know, but no, it's we're very flexible with that type of thing. Because we want you to be successful. We want to be successful as an author. And that's, that's my primary thing is I want you to finish that first draft and find success, whatever that means to you. So yeah,

Emily Einolander 44:26

all right. And so I will be linking all of these various places to find you and Plottr on our website, [hybrid pub scout.com](http://hybridpubscout.com). You can find us on Twitter still at [hybrid pub scout](http://hybridpubscout.com) and on Instagram at [hybrid pub Scout pod](http://hybridpubscout.com). That's that's all I got. Give us a give us a five star rating and a nice review. And Troy that was so much fun. Thanks for coming on.

Troy Lambert 44:53

Yes, that was a blast.

Emily Einolander 44:54

Thank you very much for having me. All right, and thanks for giving a rip about books.