

2019 Fort Worth BookFest Author Interview Series



... with **Dean Toland**, organizer of ... **Discord Book Club**
...

Where is your favorite place to read?

When I'm at home I love to curl up in my living room recliner and lose myself in a book, but on those long drives in the car I also enjoy turning off the radio and turning on a good audiobook. I find a way to squeeze in reading just about anywhere.

What is your favorite book to give an adult or a child?

I have given *Brightly Burning* by Mercedes Lackey to many friends and family of all ages, and have enjoyed watching how everyone gets different things from it. A fantasy story with two main protagonists, a teenager dealing with bullying and a family who doesn't understand him, and an adult dealing with a looming war, there are messages throughout that everyone can enjoy and learn from.

What books do you return to most often, whether passages or whole?

I have found myself drawn back to the books of Melanie Rawn the most in the past few years, revisiting the incredibly vast geographical and political climates in her *Dragon Prince* and *Dragon Star Trilogies*, captured by the unique magical system she created for her world, and feeling closely connected to the extensive list of characters she spends so much time building up. I have re-read them multiple times over the past 20 years and still find new things to catch and enjoy each time I make my way through them again.

What is the last book that had you reading past your bedtime?

I'm dealing with this right now! The book club is currently featuring *The Eye of the World* by Robert Jordan this month, the very first book in the epic *Wheel of Time* series, and I've never read it before so I felt this was the perfect opportunity to dive in. And what a deep dive it is! The chapters are long enough to get some great detail into each section but short enough to easily justify "just one more chapter" at least once or twice before finally giving in and falling asleep.

Who made reading important to you?

My paternal grandmother was a teacher and she always encouraged me to read. I got books for Christmas and for birthdays and she was one of very few who didn't scold me with "put that book down and go play outside." She still gifts me books when she finds one that she's sure will interest me, and always has a good one to tell me about that she's just finished reading herself. When I started the book club last year she was so excited, even if she didn't fully understand what Discord is and how it would work in an online setting. The "how" didn't concern her because she understood my "why".

BONUS QUESTION: What is your favorite book set in the southwest?

I recently read *Through the Deep Forest* by Russell C Connor, a dystopian fantasy that takes place all over California. Connor manages to take his background of amazing horror/thriller novels and weave some of those heart-pounding elements into a Dystopian story with Fantasy elements, and all in a familiar California setting that will make you feel just comfortable enough when reading that you'll be caught off guard along the way by all the amazing twists and jumps he puts you through. And that's only book one of an ongoing series. Connor is one of many authors who is actually in the book club, so he's there in the group to converse with readers as they enjoy his

books and answer any questions they have; it's an amazing extra element to the group that we get to enjoy by connecting readers with the authors they enjoy so much.

Organizer's Bio

Dean Toland started the book club to get out of his re-reading rut. Going back through the same dozen books repeatedly, he got comfort from the familiar, but realized there was plenty of amazing literature to explore. He wanted a way to find it and talk about it with others. His multiple author fan pages on Facebook didn't quite meet what he had in mind, nor did the forum post style of Reddit. Discord and its interactive chat format did.

Starting with a dozen people in the first week, and, approaching two years later, Discord has passed 2500 members around the world. Dean spends a lot of time online chatting, making sure he knows almost everyone in the group personally, much to the dismay of any spare time he once had. Between the group itself and the books he reads, he can discuss new things every day, it's a wonder there's time for anything else.

It helps to have family, and his cousin Michael Avery helps with the day-to-day moderation and discussion. They've both made some wonderful new friends over the past couple years and are looking forward to many more new people joining and enjoying everything the group has to offer.

Learn more about **Dean** and find out what's new with him: [Instagram.com/@DiscordBookClub](https://www.instagram.com/@DiscordBookClub)

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