

UJ SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY JOURNAL

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THROUGH THE
ARCHIVES

A Century of Student Voices

The History of the SUU University Journal

Written by Fanny Felixine

As you may have guessed from the cover, this edition of the journal focuses on the archives of Southern Utah University. So what better way to talk about archives than to talk about our own journal, right?

Quick quiz: How long has the SUU University Journal been around?
Imagine the music from a game show waiting for an answer while you do this.

1934

2015

Circle the correct answer!

We're waiting...

2001

1920

All right, are you done? Perfect, let's dive in!

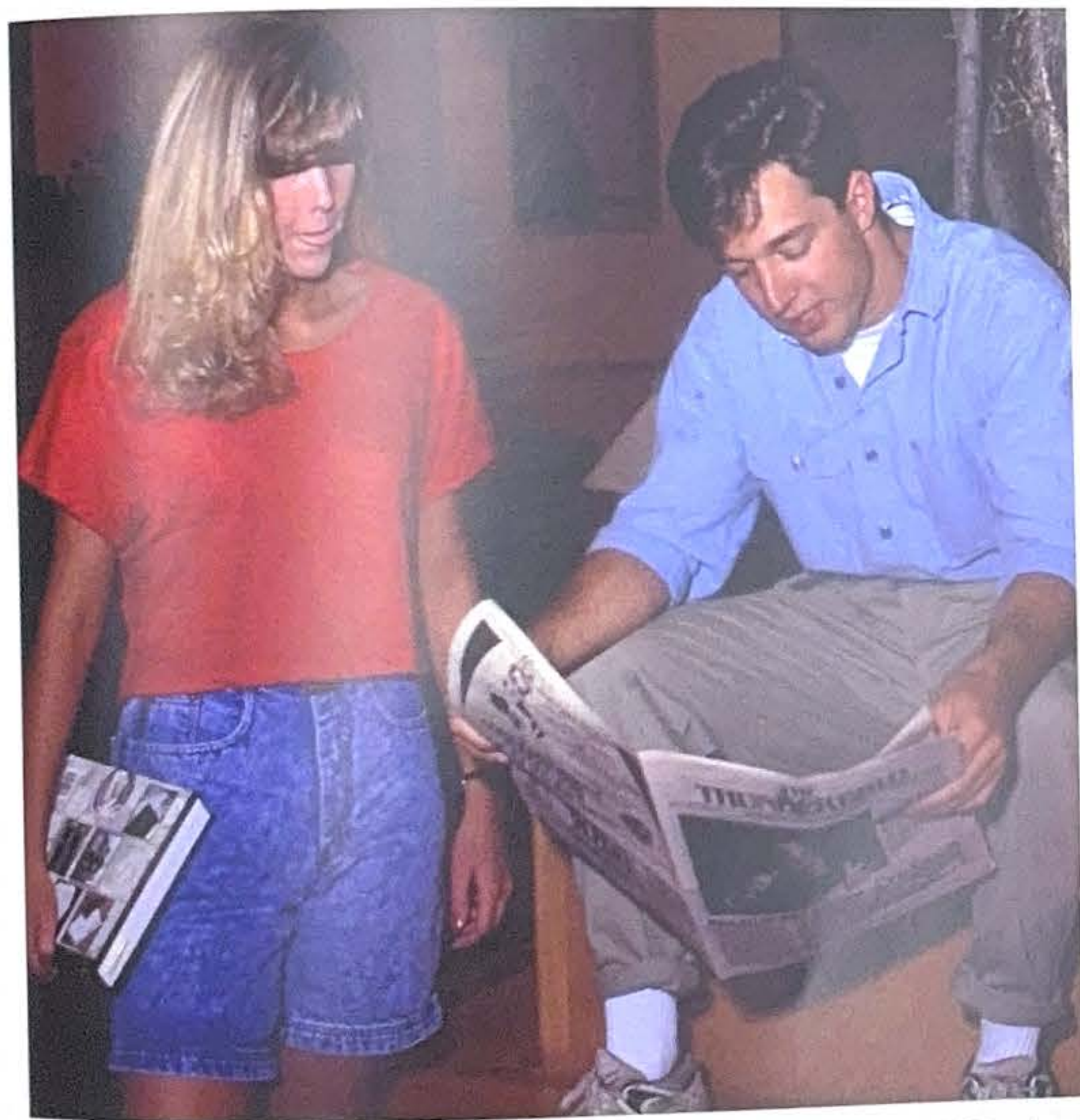
Answer: the 1920s! The first known university publication was "The Student," produced by the college yearbook team when SUU was still called Branch Agricultural College.

Then, in the 1940s, the publication became "Le Bacia," named after the college's acronym, BAC. When the school became the College of Southern Utah in 1953, the newspaper was renamed "The Thunderbird," and now it has been 73 years since the Thunderbirds took over SUU.

Finally, in 1991, the institution obtained the status of university and took the name of Southern Utah University. Simultaneously, the student newspaper was renamed "SUU University Journal."

In 2010, journalism experienced a rapid transition from print to digital publications. This change was driven by the spread of smartphones and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. In 2010, most students in the class of 2026 were only 6 years old.

SUU journalists adapted to this change, but the transition to digital took time because students, professors and staff were attached to the print version.



Students read *The Thunderbird* newspaper in the 1991 Student Center's Living Room.



Page of the *Thunderbird* edition from 1982.



A student reading SUU's *Thunderbird* Journal in 1994.

Finally, on Sep. 6, 2017, SUUNews.net was launched. The site serves as an online platform dedicated to student media, featuring student podcasts produced in the radio station.

Humanities and Social Science College Dean Jean Boreen has been at SUU since 2018 and thinks this has been a positive development for the communication program and students.

"I think that's been an exciting development that shows our willingness to keep up with the times and provide news and information to our students in a timely manner," said Boreen.

With the website and Instagram expansion, the journal underwent a major change, and the SUU University Journal went from frequent publications to only five editions a year.

The articles in these magazines are now longer and dive deeper into current issues. This format allows richer stories focused on the experiences of students, professors, staff and student organizations.

Boreen expressed how these still benefit both students and faculty.

"(SUU University Journal) was impressive when I got here and continues to be that. Our journalists don't shy away from the tough issues and I applaud them for that," said Boreen. "For our faculty and staff, we have a great opportunity to understand what our students value and appreciate, as well as see how they're involved in their courses, athletics and other extra-curriculars."

The last three issues of 2025 and 2026 covered topics such as SUU's culture, the resources available on campus and their impact on the well-being of students, professors and staff.

These magazines are written for and by people concerned with these issues, allowing them to identify with the content and giving a voice to a large part of the university community.



All University Journal editions 2023 onward.

Former editor Anna Mower described her experience working for SUU News as deeply impactful.

“SUU News is kind of one of those places where everybody gets to have a voice,” Mower said. “It’s a place where you get to tell the stories of other people and highlight things that certain people might not find as important. The journal gives you that space to share those ideas and stories with others.”

Mower worked at SUU News for two years, starting as a reporter, then becoming a section editor, and eventually co-editor-in-chief alongside Heather Turner during her final year. Before coming to SUU, she had transferred from Snow College, where she also worked on the student newspaper, but SUU still captured her heart.

“Once you’re a part of it, it’s always going to be a part of you,” said Mower.

Amid the digital expansion, SUU News has diversified its media offerings beyond print journalism.

In spring 2020, the Big Thunder podcast studio was built, marking the beginning of the journal’s podcasts. This fully equipped space allows reporters and more to practice their interviewing skills, develop audience engagement techniques and collaborate on audio storytelling.

“I especially like the fact that the Journal also works with the radio station to bring in diverse viewpoints on various issues,” mentioned Boreen.

SUU News now regularly produces shows such as Thundercast, which focuses on athletics; A Date with Sugar and Spice, which explores student relationships; and Talk Nerdy To Me, which reviews television, film and video-game related news.

These programs have allowed the organization to expand to a bigger audience on platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

Continuing its achievements and innovations, on Nov. 11, 2022, SUU News published its first-ever double-sided university newspaper. Twice as many pages means twice as much great content to explore.

In each building, you can find a display stand with past and new issues of the magazine. Don’t forget to check it out.

The SUU News office is located in the America First Event Center. Many students compare the office to a fishbowl because of the way people stare into the office at all the TVs.

With this room full of new computers, flat screens and a conference space, how can you resist taking a peek?

This is one of the other developments that has marked SUU News. Formerly, the office was located on the opposite side of the Sharwan Smith Student Center, near the Student Involvement and Leadership Office, but over the summer of 2023, the office was relocated to the America First Event Center, closer to the communication department.

This type of community engagement illustrates how the University Journal has become much more than just a publication; it is a true cultural pillar of the campus. While the office doors are kept locked to protect the expensive equipment, everyone is welcome to come by and learn more about SUU News.

Mower emphasized that SUU News welcomes students from all backgrounds and majors. Whether someone studies theater, English, sports or another field, there is a place for them. The stories often come directly from student conversations and concerns, while also incorporating insights from professors and community members across generations.

“Our student journalists talk to a wide variety of people and I believe this helps all of campus understand student concerns and successes more concretely,” said Boreen. “They can also provide immediate responses through SUU News even as the journal allows for a deeper dive into events, activities and concerns going on around campus.”

For nearly a century, student journalism at Southern Utah University has monitored campus life, served as a place for students to voice their opinions and trained generations of storytellers. From its humble beginnings in the early 20th century to the multifaceted media organization it has become the main source of information about events, opinions and student life on campus.

If you would like to see more, the university’s newspaper archives are available on the Gerald R. Sherratt Library website through their SUU Digital Library and Archives.