

SAMPLE: FINAL PROPOSAL – MAIN LIBRARY GALLERY UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES

[included contact information for applicant here]

3. General Exhibition Topic/Subject Matter:

Please expand upon your brief description from your statement of interest submission. In addition, describe in greater detail the impact you hope to make.

We propose an exhibit related to the life of Bill Sackter, the namesake of Wild Bill's (formerly Wild Bill's Coffee Shop) in the School of Social Work, placing his story in the context of disability rights and the historic treatment of people with disabilities. During the year that marks the 110th anniversary of Sackter's birth and the 40th anniversary of his death, we wish to celebrate the impact that Bill's life—and his unlikely status as a national celebrity—had on the nation's understanding of people with disabilities and their place in society.

As Wild Bill's shifts its modality away from a coffee shop and toward a more expansive mission of advancing social justice for all marginalized populations, we hope to teach a new generation of people about Bill Sackter's story—not only as an important part of the history of the University of Iowa and our national leadership in the area of disability, but also as a demonstration the power of writing and storytelling (in this case, the Emmy- and Golden Globe- winning film "Bill," written by Barry Morrow) and how stories can shift perspectives, expand understanding and empathy, and truly make a difference on a large scale.

Many people who grew up in the period of time since deinstitutionalization—including students, faculty, staff, and community members—are not aware of the history of isolation and exclusion that people with disabilities experienced before the 1960s, or why it was revolutionary that Bill Sackter (a man who is generally understood to have had an intellectual disability) ran a coffee shop on the University of Iowa campus. This exhibit would help to illuminate the great progress that has been made, and also point visitors in the direction of the inclusion and accessibility work that still needs to be done.

4. Complete Exhibition Abstract:

Approximately 400 - 800 words describing in detail the exhibition scope, context, and content. (Word count provided as a guideline only.)

We envision a presentation of the history of people with disabilities at Iowa, with Bill Sackter at the center of the story. Milestones of Bill's life will be used to tell the story of

the history of society's approach to people with disabilities, and the advancement of their rights and freedoms over the duration of his life and since then. The exhibit itself will be designed for optimal accessibility, taking into consideration and accommodating multiple ability factors, such as hearing, sight, and mobility impairment, as well as cognitive impairment and neurodiversity.

The exhibit will feature materials from the more distant past, during the time when Bill was born (1913) and when people with disabilities or mental illness were being institutionalized en masse. Bill was taken from his family and sent to Faribault State School for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic in Minnesota in 1920 at the age of seven, and the exhibit can demonstrate what was happening at the University of Iowa with regard to people with mental disabilities in 1920: The Iowa Psychopathic Hospital was created, which was distinct from the work of the four existing state hospitals (more akin to Faribault) for the insane and the two state hospitals for mentally defective and epileptic patients.

Bill was released from Faribault State School for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic in 1964, at the age of 51, while the process of deinstitutionalization was in full swing nationally. Shortly after that time, he met and became friends with Barry and Bev Morrow in the Twin Cities, who later became his legal guardians and moved him to Iowa City, where Barry had secured a job in the School of Social Work. Bill found work at the School, too, hired by Social Work Professor and then-director of the school, Tom Walz, to make coffee for faculty and students in what was eventually named Wild Bill's Coffee Shop (1975). More than just a coffee shop, Wild Bill's was established as a learning lab for social work students, where they could learn about disabilities and gain experience interacting with a person who had an intellectual disability.

We propose to show in the exhibit other/parallel developments that were happening at the University of Iowa with regard to disability during the 1960s and 70s, and how the community / university was handling the societal change and shift in treatment / inclusion at that time—for example, the passage of Federal legislation Section 504: Rehabilitation Act, and the subsequent establishment of the Office of Services for the Handicapped (later the Office of Services for Persons with Disabilities, and now Student Disability Services) at the University of Iowa.

At the urging of Social Work students, Barry Morrow wrote about his life and friendship with Bill, and the story was turned into a TV movie called "Bill," which starred Mickey Rooney and Dennis Quaid. The film was broadcast nationally on NBC in 1981, with its premiere taking place at Hancher Auditorium. Mickey Rooney won a Golden Globe Award and an Emmy Award for his role, and the movie also won an Emmy as Outstanding Drama Special. A sequel, "Bill: On His Own," costarring Helen Hunt, was

released in 1983. Not only was it a success in terms of entertainment; it also had a profound impact on a generation of television viewers. As Barry said in the 2008 documentary film *A Friend Indeed – The Bill Sackter Story*, “It presented, for the first time ever, a sympathetic role of a person with mental retardation, that was triumphant.” Barry donated his Emmy to the University of Iowa in 2010, and has recently indicated interest in donating his sizeable personal collection of Bill-related and movie-related materials, such as screenplays and scripts, which could also be displayed for the very first time. (The Emmy is currently on display in the Main Library.) It may be compelling to also have the film (or selected clips) playing silently on a screen in the exhibit hall. The School of Social Work also has (currently on display in *Wild Bill’s*) a large-format print of a photograph of Bill Sackter with Mickey Rooney and Barry Morrow.

Bill Sackter died in 1983, and *Wild Bill’s Coffee Shop* remained in operation in the School of Social Work, employing dozens of community members with various disabilities over the years, until Spring of 2020. At that time, the COVID pandemic forced the retail operation to close—but even before the pandemic, the School was envisioning an updated model for the learning lab that would be more inclusive, focused on social justice for people with a wide range of marginalized identities. The learning lab is now called *Wild Bill’s*.

In 1998, School of Social Work Director and Professor Tom Walz, who hired both Morrow and Sackter, wrote a book about Bill: *The Unlikely Celebrity: Bill Sackter’s Triumph Over Disability*. The manuscript is in Special Collections and could be displayed with other Tom Walz materials that are currently in the process of being donated to Special Collections by the School of Social Work. In 2008, filmmaker Lane Wyrick released the documentary film *A Friend Indeed – The Bill Sackter Story* using actual photos, film and video footage of Bill Sackter (taken by Morrow in the 1970s and 1980s), along with Wyrick’s filmed interviews with people closest to Bill. Having the documentary playing on a big screen in the exhibit hall throughout the exhibit would be a wonderful enhancement to the display.

As a bridge to the present / future, an interactive element to the exhibit, and to emphasize the power of storytelling in the advancement of social justice, we would like to explore the possibility of inviting visitors to share their own stories of their lived experiences with disability. Whether we set this up as a recording booth, an element of the virtual exhibit on your website, a call-in line where people can record messages, or a mobile app (or any/all of the above), we would like to collect stories and share selected stories to a wider audience via the *Wild Bill’s Cup of Social Justice* podcast, which is a new project of the *Wild Bill’s* learning lab in the School of Social Work.

5. **Background Information:**

Please provide information that will acquaint the *Libraries with the subject of the exhibition. Please assume that the readers of this proposal will have, at best, passing acquaintance with this topic; provide an overview that will help them to better understand the proposed exhibit's context and scope.*

In his book *The Unlikely Celebrity*, Thomas Walz (the late, former director of the University of Iowa School of Social Work) tells the story of Bill Sackter, a man who spent 44 years in a Minnesota mental institution and emerged to blossom into a most unlikely celebrity. Some years after his discharge from Fairbault State Hospital as a result of the movement to deinstitutionalize people with disabilities and mental illness in the 1960s, Bill enjoyed a serendipitous encounter with a young college student and part-time musician, Barry Morrow. When Morrow accepted a job at the School of Social Work at the University of Iowa, Bill followed him to Iowa City and Tom Walz put him in charge of a small coffee service, which eventually came to be known as Wild Bill's Coffee Shop.

A cheerful man of great goodwill who was a harmonica enthusiast, Bill quickly became a beloved figure on campus and throughout the Iowa City community, and his life as a celebrity began in earnest. Sackter was named Handicapped Iowan of the Year in 1976, attending a ceremony in Washington, D.C., and President Jimmy Carter gave him special recognition in 1979. Wild Bill's was made famous when its first proprietor, Bill Sackter, was featured in a television movie and a sequel about his life. The first movie, which won Emmy awards for co-writer Barry Morrow and actor Mickey Rooney (as Bill Sackter), was called *Bill* (1981); the sequel was entitled *Bill on His Own* (1983). Years later, Morrow would win an Oscar for his script of *Rain Man*.

After Bill's death in 1983, the coffee shop expanded. It was remodeled in 2009, and until the retail operation ceased in 2020, employed 12+ persons with disabilities each academic year. In 2008, Iowa Citian Lane Wyrick made a documentary about the real life of Bill Sackter, called *A Friend Indeed—The Bill Sackter Story*. The movie has won numerous awards. The film is available for viewing on YouTube or at <https://www.billsackter.com>.

Since Tom Walz created Wild Bill's Coffee Shop in 1975 to provide a vocation for Bill Sackter, it has evolved to become a nonprofit, service-learning project of the University of Iowa School of Social Work, with a focus on the clinical education of social work students and service to the community of people with disabilities. In 1975, people with disabilities had little access to employment and our students had little access to experiences working with disabled community members—so the coffee shop model was a wonderful solution to a big societal problem at that time. It has changed in many ways

over time, but Wild Bill's was in continuous operation from that time until the COVID-19 pandemic caused us to close our doors temporarily, in March of 2020. Wild Bill's reopened in Fall 2021, with a new model and focus. Wild Bill's is no longer a coffee shop. Instead, the space functions as a workshop space, classroom and meeting space—where students learn hands-on social worker skills through labs, discussion groups, and practicum seminars; build community, advocacy skills, and leadership in a social-justice-focused meeting and event space; and create multimedia projects in a dedicated studio space, to advance understanding of social justice issues and advocate for the rights and inclusion of marginalized and oppressed people through storytelling.

6. **Learning Objectives:**

Please describe 3-5 real learning objectives for this exhibit. What can visitors expect to discover or learn from the exhibit? Why is the topic relevant or interesting today? What is the major focus, and how would you currently propose to split the information into digestible sections for visitors?

Visitors to the exhibit will:

- Understand how societal perceptions and treatment of people with disabilities have changed over the last 100 years, at the University of Iowa and beyond.
- Learn how the story of one disabled person, treated with dignity and empathy and inclusion by the people around him, became a vehicle for fostering greater understanding by a large portion of the population—and subsequently, greater inclusion and equity for people like him in other communities.
- Grasp the power of storytelling in changing perspectives and empowering social change.
- Be inspired to tell their own stories and become advocates (and self-advocates) for people with disabilities and others with marginalized or oppressed identities. The topics of disability, accessibility, and inclusion continue to be relevant today, because more than 50 million people in the United States, approximately one in five, have some type of disability. Disability can be temporary or chronic, acquired at birth or later in life, and, of all the protected classes, it is one of the only protected classes in which anyone at any time may find him or herself a member. Disability is often overlooked, though, and accessibility is often an afterthought. We propose to organize historical information about disability chronologically, parallel to the life story of Bill Sackter—but continuing since Sackter's life ended. We want to show that, while much progress has been made (and we hope to demonstrate that Iowa has been a leader in this), there is still much advocacy needed to ensure full inclusion of people with disabilities, both on our campus

and in society as a whole.

7. Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion:

Please describe your plan for including diverse perspectives in your exhibit.

The subject of inclusion and equity for individuals with disabilities is highly relevant to larger topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion for people with marginalized identities. People who have disabilities (along with their other intersectional identities) are often forgotten in the conversation, for a number of reasons—whether because most disabilities are not visible to others, because disabilities are widely misunderstood or feared by the general public, or because (especially in the past) they are literally hidden from society’s view. Bill Sackter’s story is an example of a pivot point in history, when the story of one disabled person, treated with dignity and empathy and inclusion by the people around him, became a vehicle for fostering greater understanding by a large portion of the population—and subsequently, greater inclusion and equity for people like him in other communities.

8. Please describe ways in which various audiences will connect with your exhibit and its content. (Examples: UI community, the general public, people who are unfamiliar with the topic of the exhibit, etc.)

University of Iowa students (nearly all of whom were born after Bill Sackter’s death) will come to understand that the world in which they’ve grown up—where people with disabilities are more present and integrated in the community—started with the vision, hard work, and educational efforts of a small group of dedicated people. Long-time University and Iowa City community members will reminisce and reflect on the legacy of Bill Sackter, Wild Bill’s, and the groundbreaking work of the School of Social Work (and other departments within the University) and its faculty, staff, and students in advancing the rights, inclusion, care for, and visibility of people with disabilities. Current faculty and staff will learn about Bill Sackter, Wild Bill’s Coffee Shop, and consider how they, too, might make a global difference in support of social justice through local, intentional acts of inclusion, advocacy, and storytelling. Community members with disabilities will experience a narrative that is centered on their history, identity, and civil rights, and will have an opportunity to share the stories of their own lived experience.

9. Lead Curator:

Please list one lead curator for this exhibition. This person should be willing to work closely with the Exhibition and Engagement Coordinator, who oversees the production timeline for Main Library Gallery exhibitions. The Lead Curator should be prepared to devote at least 15 months to exhibition production: 9 months of moderate work to

plan the exhibition, followed by three months of intensive work before opening day, and ending with approximately three months of intensive work while the exhibition is open. This includes *availability to give guided tours, talks, and other types of exhibit-related programming.*

Jen Knights, School of Social Work

10. **Co-curators:**

Please list all confirmed co-curators for this exhibition. Co-curators will participate in item selection, authoring exhibition text and public relations/communications, planning and managing exhibit events, curricular initiatives, and other tasks. Co-curatorial commitment spans 15 months to exhibition production: 9 months of moderate work to plan the exhibition, followed by three months of intensive work before opening day, and ending with three months of intensive work while the exhibition is open.

Brad Ferrier, UI Libraries

11. **Proposed Partners:**

Please list entities that could be sponsoring and producing partners for the exhibition. You need not have a firm commitment from a proposed *partner*, but add an *annotation if any official commitment has been made - e.g., Department of History (verbal agreement from dept. chair).*

- UI Council on Disability Awareness (verbal agreement)
- UI Students for Disability Advocacy and Awareness UI Student Disability Services (verbal agreement)
- UI Libraries (co-curation)
- UI Faculty/Staff Disability Service
- UI Center for Disabilities and Development UI
- OneIT
- UI REACH Program Project
- SEARCH (Judy Warth)
- UI Health + Human Physiology Dept / Disability Studies Certificate Program / Child Life
- UI Diversity Councils Leadership University of Iowa Center for Advancement (verbal agreement)
- Organizers of Judy Heumann Presidential Lecture in Spring 2022
- The Harkin Institute Disability Rights Iowa
- FilmScene
- Pomerantz Career Center

- Stanley Museum of Art

12. Please select the option that best describes this exhibit, noting that one of the primary purposes of the Main Library Gallery is to showcase items from the UI Libraries collections:

Internal/External: Exhibition curated by UI personnel, most items held at UI Libraries, some items to be loaned from other campus or community collections.

13. Based on your review of UI Libraries collections, what types of items would you wish to showcase as part of this exhibition? Please list item examples here, along with their collection names/locations. The review committee is interested in examples of actual objects for display rather than a list of collections to search, and would like to see variety. Visual appeal is an important aspect of the exhibition medium.

Please note that most of these objects should come from the University of Iowa Libraries, though a few objects could also be borrowed from other campus locations and from community partners. Also note that research appointments can be made to visit Special Collections & Archives and other locations.

1. *Documentary film "A Friend Indeed: The Bill Sackter Story."* DVD / UI Special Collections, William "Bill" Sackter Papers (msc1028)

2. Bill Sackter's clothing items / William "Bill" Sackter Papers (msc1028)

3. Tom Walz book manuscript - from University of Iowa Archives / Tom Walz Papers or possibly Archives HV3006 .I68W35 1998

4. Bill Sackter prints, negative, book publicity, ca. 1983 / UI Archives, Center for Media Production Photographic Services Image Collection (RG30.0001.044)

5. Manuscript by Barry Morrow: "On My Own: A Story Based on the Life of William Sackter" / Tom Walz Papers, RG99.0344

6. The Iowa State Psychopathic Hospital and the Department of Psychiatry : semicentennial celebration 1920-1970 / UI Special Collections

7. Barry Morrow's Emmy Award (currently housed in Main Library)

8. Guide to the Iowa Association for Children with Learning Disabilities Records / UI Special Collections

9. Initial Proposal for the Student Disability Services (SDS) Office / UI Archives, Student Disability Services Records, Box 5
10. History of the SDS / UI Archives, Student Disability Services Records, Box 5
11. Brochures, correspondence, magazine and newspaper clippings, official university assessments and reports, pamphlets, training guides, federal and state guidelines, and photographs / UI Archives, Student Disability Services Records
12. Materials / ribbons from conferences "Your Civil Rights" (1993) and "Proactive Implementation of the ADA in Higher Education" (1994) / UI Archives, Council on Disability Awareness Records RG05.0003.057
13. Bill Sackter's personal belongings: harmonica, personalized cowboy hat with BILL on the band, \$2 bill (his "lucky piece"), coffee cup / UI School of Social Work collection
14. Large-format print of photograph / UI School of Social Work collection
15. Plaques including the "disabled Iowan of the Year" award / UI School of Social Work collection
16. Booklet about the Americans with Disabilities Act / Iowa Women's Archives, Elizabeth Riesz papers
17. 1970s-80s Correspondence between parents of children with disabilities and the Iowa City Public School District regarding special education / Iowa Women's Archives, Elizabeth Riesz papers
18. Photographs, publications, reports, training materials, and speeches from the National Organization on Disability (NOD) / Iowa Women's Archives, Shirley Sandage papers (IWA0318)
19. Manuscripts, photographs, films, and personal items, details TBD / Barry Morrow personal collection
14. **Confirmed sources of funding for this exhibition, if currently applicable, and amounts: Please list the source, amount of funding, and any stipulations attached to the fund - e.g., Department of English, \$300.00, to be used for speaker honoraria. If none confirmed, please move to the next question.**

CLAS / School of Social Work - \$300.00, to be used for speaker honoraria.

15. If no confirmed sources of funding, please list any potential sources of funding for this exhibition and possible amounts, if applicable. *Note that exhibits are primarily funded by Friends of the UI Libraries, but supplemental funding is always appreciated.*

- Council on Disability Awareness - \$250 to help fund story-collecting project
- OneIT - \$250 to help fund technology for story-collecting project
- Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - \$1,000 Diversity Catalyst Seed Grant
- The Harkin Institute – funding for accessibility features

16. Events your team plans to offer and help coordinate as part of the exhibition: Please list all proposed and/or confirmed events that would coincide with the exhibit, for example guest lectures, workshops, open houses, public events, and other outreach activities, etc. Please list any campus or area events that would coincide with the exhibition, for example anniversaries, conferences, symposia, and other complementary programming.

Proposed:

- Guest lecture by Barry Morrow Open House / 110th Bill Sackter “Birthday” party Social Work CEU events
- About the School of Social Work, Tom Walz, and the history of Wild Bill’s
- Disability-related Ethics course
- FilmScene series screening of Bill, Bill On His Own, and A Friend Indeed: The Bill Sackter Story with potential talks by Barry Morrow and Lane Wyrick Visit / Talk by Tom Harkin, The Harkin Institute CDA
- Open house / meet + greet
- Homecoming alumni event
- Special Access Viewing Hours, for individuals with autism and their families to enjoy the exhibit in a calm and welcoming environment
- Special event for Wild Bill’s former staff Special outings
- Viewings for staff and clients of Systems Unlimited, Goodwill, The Arc, MYEP, Access 2 Independence
- Uptown Bill’s Career fair or employment fair for PWD, Disability organizations

Confirmed:

- National Disabilities Employment Awareness Month – October
- Learning Disabilities and Dyslexia Awareness Month - October
- 110th Anniversary of Bill Sackter’s birth year (1913) 40th Anniversary of Bill Sackter’s death year (1983)

17. Potential Curricular Projects or Initiatives:

List any potential curricular projects or initiatives that could accompany this exhibition. For each project/initiative, please list confirmed contacts and their role. Please describe in general how you might interact with a class visiting the Main Library Gallery. (Class visits are booked by the Exhibition and Engagement Coordinator, but curators may sometimes be asked to instruct or present depending on class needs/interests.)

Lead faculty contact: Stephen Cummings, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., L.I.S.W. UI School of Social Work Clinical Associate Professor, Distance Education Administrator, MSW Program Director

If our proposal is selected, exhibit-related units and assignments will be incorporated into Fall 2023 curriculum for the following Social Work courses:

- Thinking Like A Social Worker, Carolyn Hartley and Stephen Cummings (graduate)
- Aging Matters: Introduction to Gerontology, May Guo / Yi Wang (undergraduate)
- Theory and Skills for Working with Organizations and Communities, Megan Gilster (graduate)

And possibly also:

- Discrimination, Oppression, and Diversity, Motier Haskins (undergraduate)
- Social Welfare Policy and Practice, Christopher Veeh (undergraduate)

Additionally, we propose that our Social Work faculty will create a resource library of materials such as a discussion guide, worksheets, and assignment outlines to help faculty from diverse disciplines teach using the exhibit. At least one assignment will feature a storytelling element, which then can be incorporated into the story-gathering interactive element of the exhibit.

Curator Jen Knights and Co-curator Brad Ferrier can be available to give guided tours to classes, with opportunity for Q&A afterwards.

School of Social Work Professor and Director Mercedes Bern-Klug and Program & Admissions Administrator Kate Kemp, both of whom knew Bill Sackter and interacted with him in the School of Social Work, can also be available to lead tours and tell stories.

18. Would you be willing to assist with the creation of content for a subject guide to be made available for faculty and students?

Yes

19. Please note any additional comments about your proposed exhibition that the Gallery Advisory Team should be aware of.

It is distinctly important this exhibit be exceedingly accessible to persons of all abilities. While we recognize that this is an important factor/goal for any exhibit in the UI Main Library Gallery or elsewhere (if we're doing it right), this element will be especially visible here. It will be a tremendous opportunity to showcase some of the latest advances in museum accessibility technology and best practices in this area. It may also be a unique opportunity for funding—especially if accessibility features developed with this exhibit in mind then can be operationalized for ongoing use in the gallery.

20. Do you agree to follow the production timeline and complete necessary content by mutually agreed-upon deadlines?

Yes