

Teaching with Primary Sources: Student Research Assignments

Restraints Research Guide

The use of restraints was common but regularly debated in the history of U.S. mental health institutions. Although antithetical to the philosophy of moral treatment, mechanical restraints and chemical restraints were adopted to varying degrees in all states. This history also overlaps with the development of sleep aids, such as in the development of the Utica crib and the use of chemical restraints.

About the Annual Reports

Historically, every asylum and state hospital submitted a report annually to their Board and state government. These reports contain day-to-day details about the operations of an institution for a given year. Typical reports list patient demographics and statistics, operational highlights, struggles the institution is facing, and financial reports. Some reports will also feature case studies, floor plans, or even photographs. They are a rich resource for information on the history of disease classification, treatment philosophy and adoption, and institutional experiences.

The [Archives of the History of American Psychology](#) holds the largest multi-region collection of asylum and state hospital reports in the U.S. The Cushing Memorial Library Collection of Asylum Reports was collected and donated by Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. It contains over 570 reports representing 33 states between the years 1834 to 1967.

The bulk of the collection is digitized and searchable through our website at:

<https://collections.uakron.edu/digital/collection/AsylumReport>

Recommended Reports

Not all annual reports include discussion of restraints. The suggestions below are intended to help start the research process; they are not a complete listing of discussions of restraints in the collection.

Debating the Use of Mechanical Restraints

The use of mechanical restraints divided U.S. institutions, and even those who discouraged the practice often described the devices as “necessary” or “unavoidable.” Criticism of this reluctant acceptance also came from Britain, where a non-restraint movement had emerged in the late 1830s. Non-restraint did not equate to the complete elimination of restraints but, instead, the replacement of mechanical restraints (e.g., straightjackets, bed straps, muffs, etc.) with the use of seclusion and manual restraint on the part of attendants.

| Year | Institution | Location | Call number |
|-----------|--|------------------|--|
| 1844 | Report of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane | Philadelphia, PA | RC445 .P4 P65 1844 |
| 1852 | Report of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane | Philadelphia, PA | RC445 .P4 P65 1852 |
| 1853 | Report of the Regents of the Lunatic Asylum, to the Legislature of South Carolina | Columbia, SC | RC445 .S6 C3 1853 |
| 1857 | Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the State Lunatic Hospital, at Worcester | Worcester, MA | RC445 .M4 W67 1857 |
| 1863 | Reports of the Trustees and Superintendent of the Butler Hospital for the Insane | Providence, RI | RC445 .R4 B87 1863 |
| 1872 | Annual Report of the Resident Physician of Kings County Lunatic Asylum | Flatbush, NY | RC445 .N7 K54 v. 1872 |
| 1879 | The Fifty-fifth Annual Report of the Officers of the Retreat for the Insane | Hartford, CT | RC445 .C8 H37 1879 |
| 1882 | Annual Report of the Central Kentucky Lunatic Asylum | Anchorage, KY | RC445 .K4 C46 1882 |
| 1882 | Twenty-third Annual Report of the Superintendent of the State Asylum for Insane Criminals | Auburn, NY | RC445 N7 A92 1882 |
| 1886-1887 | Biennial Report of the Trustees and Superintendent of the State Lunatic Asylum to the Legislature of Mississippi | Whitfield, MS | RC445 .M73 J3 1888 |
| 1889 | Forty-seventh Annual Report of the Managers of the State Lunatic Asylum at Utica | Utica, NY | RC445 .N7 N4 1889 |
| 1895 | Eleventh Annual Report of the Trustees of the Westborough Insane Hospital | Westborough, MA | RC445 .M4 W3 1895 |

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|------|--|---------------|--|
| 1908 | Twenty-third Report of the Lunacy Commission to His Excellency the Governor of Maryland (<i>see pp. 113-121</i>) | Frederick, MD | RC445 .M3 L86 1904 |
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The Utica Crib

The Utica crib or covered bedstead was originally developed as an aid to those who walked in their sleep but quickly became a controversial restraint device. Developed in France, it was adopted at a handful of institutions in the U.S., where it took on the name “Utica” from its most vocal proponents at the State Lunatic Asylum in Utica, NY.

| Year | Institution | Location | Call number |
|------|--|---------------|--|
| 1861 | Eighteenth Annual Report of the Managers of the State Lunatic Asylum | Utica, NY | RC445 .N7 N4 1861 |
| 1864 | Twenty-First Annual Report of the Managers of the State Lunatic Asylum | Utica, NY | RC445 .N7 N4 1863 |
| 1882 | Annual Report of the Central Kentucky Lunatic Asylum | Anchorage, KY | RC445 .K4 C46 1885 |
| 1887 | Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Managers of the State Lunatic Asylum at Utica | Utica, NY | RC445 .N7 N4 1887 |

Chemical Restraints

Sedatives (e.g., morphine, opium, etc.) have a long history of use within U.S. mental health institutions. In the late nineteenth century, a handful of institutions expanded their use to include hypnotics (e.g., hydrate of chloral). These categories of drugs served as both sleep aids and a form of chemical restraint or “quieting medicine.”

| Year | Institution | Location | Call number |
|------|--|-----------------|--|
| 1873 | Thirty-first Annual Report of the Managers of the State Lunatic Asylum | Utica, NY | RC445 .N7 N4 1873 |
| 1883 | Superintendent’s Report of the State Lunatic Asylum | Austin, TX | RC445 .T33 T3 1883 |
| 1885 | Annual Reports of the Officers and Managers of the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum, at Trenton | Trenton, NJ | RC445 .N5 T7 1885 |
| 1888 | Fourth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Westborough Insane Hospital | Westborough, MA | RC445 .M4 W3 1888 |
| 1889 | Thirty-sixth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Taunton Lunatic Hospital | Taunton, MA | RC445 .M4 T38 1889 |

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| 1895 | Eleventh Annual Report of the Trustees of the Westborough Insane Hospital | Westborough, MA | RC445 .M4 W3 1895 |
| 1914 | Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Topeka State Hospital, made to the Board of Control | Topeka, KS | RC445 .K2 T6 v. 1914 |

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