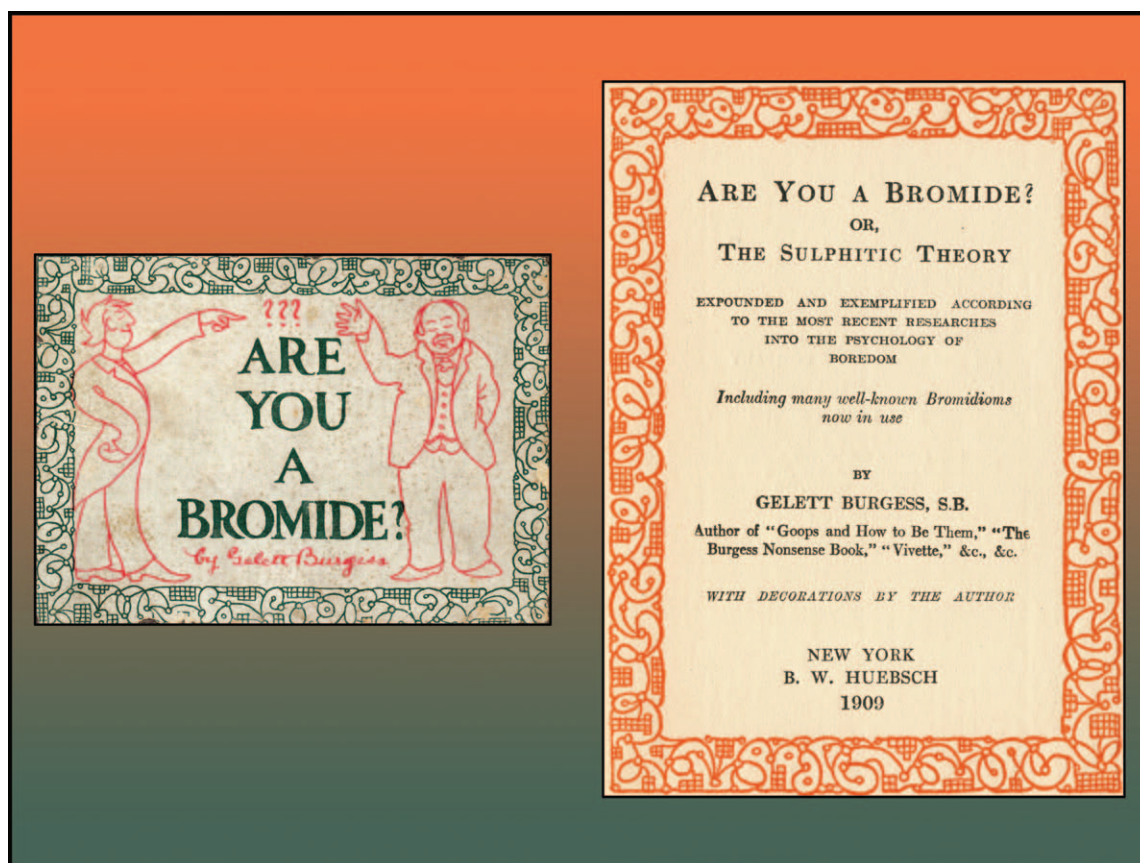


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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Of Blurbs and Bromides—Gelett Burgess Asks, “Are You a Bromide?”



From 1906 to 1913, American humorist Gelett Burgess (1866–1951) published annual editions of his book *Are You a Bromide?* The cover (left) and title page (right) were frequently dust-jacketed with “Blinda Blurb,” a buxom cartoon drawn by Burgess to illustrate a “blurb,” the word he coined to mean an excessive laudatory testimonial that a publisher added to dustjackets to sell more books. In the book’s title, from the original association with a class of calming drugs, the word “bromide” had evolved to refer to an unoriginal, ineffective, or trite expression designed to placate a situation. Whether unoriginal or original, the pharmaceutical industry has supplied a bonanza of bromides for anesthesiologists’ clinical use: bromides of ethyl, glycopyrronium, pancuronium, pipecuronium, rapacuronium, rocuronium, succinylcholine, vecuronium, etc. And investigations into possible “bromism” (sluggishness, disinhibition, irritability, depression, etc.) have been prompted by exposure to bromides as diverse as pyridostigmine and dextromethorphan. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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