

CARTE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE ET SYSTEMATIQUE DE LA LUNE BY CHARLES LE MORVAN

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In his *Photographic and Systematic Map of the Moon (Carte Photographique et Systematique de la Lune)*, the astronomer Charles Le Morvan (1865–1933) reused the original plates from the *Atlas photographique de la Lune* by Maurice Loewy (1833–1907) and Pierre Puiseux (1855–1928), first published between 1896 and 1910 by the Paris Observatory.

Le Morvan had already participated in the production of the Loewy–Puiseux atlas through his own lunar observations and by preparing glass plates, especially after Loewy’s death in October 1907.

Le Morvan joined the staff of the Paris Observatory in 1890, where he spent his entire working life. In 1914 Morvan edited the *Carte Photographique de la Lune*, which contained copies of photographs taken from the *Atlas Photographique de la Lune*. The finance for this work had come from a grant of 4000 francs from the Bonaparte Fund of the Paris Academy of Sciences.” (S. Hughes, *Catchers of the Light*, 2012, p. 188).

Complete sets of this work are rare. The Linda Hall Library in Kansas City holds a full copy of the 48 sheets; the University of Arizona in Tucson possesses only the first 24 sheets; the Paris Observatory has the complete volume; and copies are also held by the Universidade de São Paulo and Utrecht University, though the extent of these last two sets is unspecified.

A supplement, published in 1926, contained six plates of the lunar disk at different phases (first quarter, full moon, etc.) at a smaller scale.

● **What is Le Morvan’s *Carte Photographique et Systématique de la Lune*?**

It’s a **comprehensive lunar atlas** created by French astronomer **Charles Le Morvan** and published between **1914 and 1926**. The atlas is notable for combining:

- **High-quality lunar photographs** (remarkably sharp for the era)
- **Systematic mapping** of lunar features
- **Detailed nomenclature** following the conventions of the time

Le Morvan’s goal was to produce a **complete photographic map** of the Moon’s visible hemisphere, organized in a way that was both scientifically rigorous and visually accessible.

Why is it important?

A bridge between eras

Le Morvan’s atlas sits at a pivotal moment in astronomy—after the first wave of lunar photography (mid-1800s) but before the ultra-precise telescopic and spacecraft imaging of the mid-20th century.

Photographic precision

Unlike earlier hand-drawn maps, Le Morvan relied heavily on **photographic plates**, giving his atlas a level of objectivity and detail that made it a reference for decades.

Systematic organization

He divided the lunar surface into **quadrants and sections**, making it easier for astronomers to locate and compare features.

Influence on later atlases

His work helped set the stage for later, more famous atlases such as:

- **Kuiper's Photographic Lunar Atlas (1960)**
- **The Consolidated Lunar Atlas (1967)**
- **NASA's Lunar Orbiter atlases**

What does the atlas contain?

Although editions vary, the atlas typically includes:

- **Large-format photographic plates** of the Moon
- **Close-ups of major craters and maria**
- **Coordinate grids** for precise location
- **Tables of named features**
- **Explanatory notes** on observation and imaging techniques

It's both a scientific document and a beautiful historical artifact.

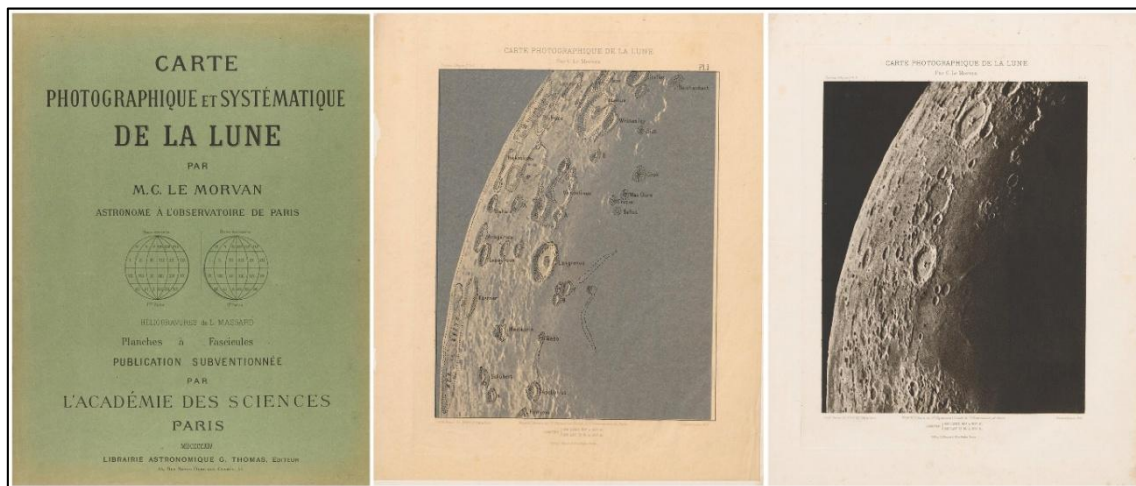


Figure 1 - *Carte Photographique et Systematique de la Lune* by Charles Le Morvan (1914).

Large folio (505 x 385 mm). 6 fascicles comprising 48 photographic plates in heliogravures by L. Massard after the photographs by the author, taken at the Observatoire de Paris between 1902 and 1907. The plates are numbered I to XXIV and I-A to XXIV-A. The size of the heliogravure area is 320 x 255 mm. Each of plates I to XXIV with original transparent tissue key overlay with outlines and captions of lunar features, the remaining plates with tissue guards only, partly with outlines drawn by hand in pencil. The plates loose as issued in the printed fascicle wrappers. The wrappers partly split at

folds and repaired. A few plates chipped, a few plates little soiled or tanned at margins. Accompanied by a text volume: Description sommaire et coordonnées rectilignes des principales formations représentées sur les planches, 4to (312 x 240 mm), iv, 66, 14 pp. Text volume in original printed wrappers, little browned throughout. Plates and text volume housed in a custom-made clamshell box. Altogether an outstanding, unsophisticated copy, complete with the text volume.

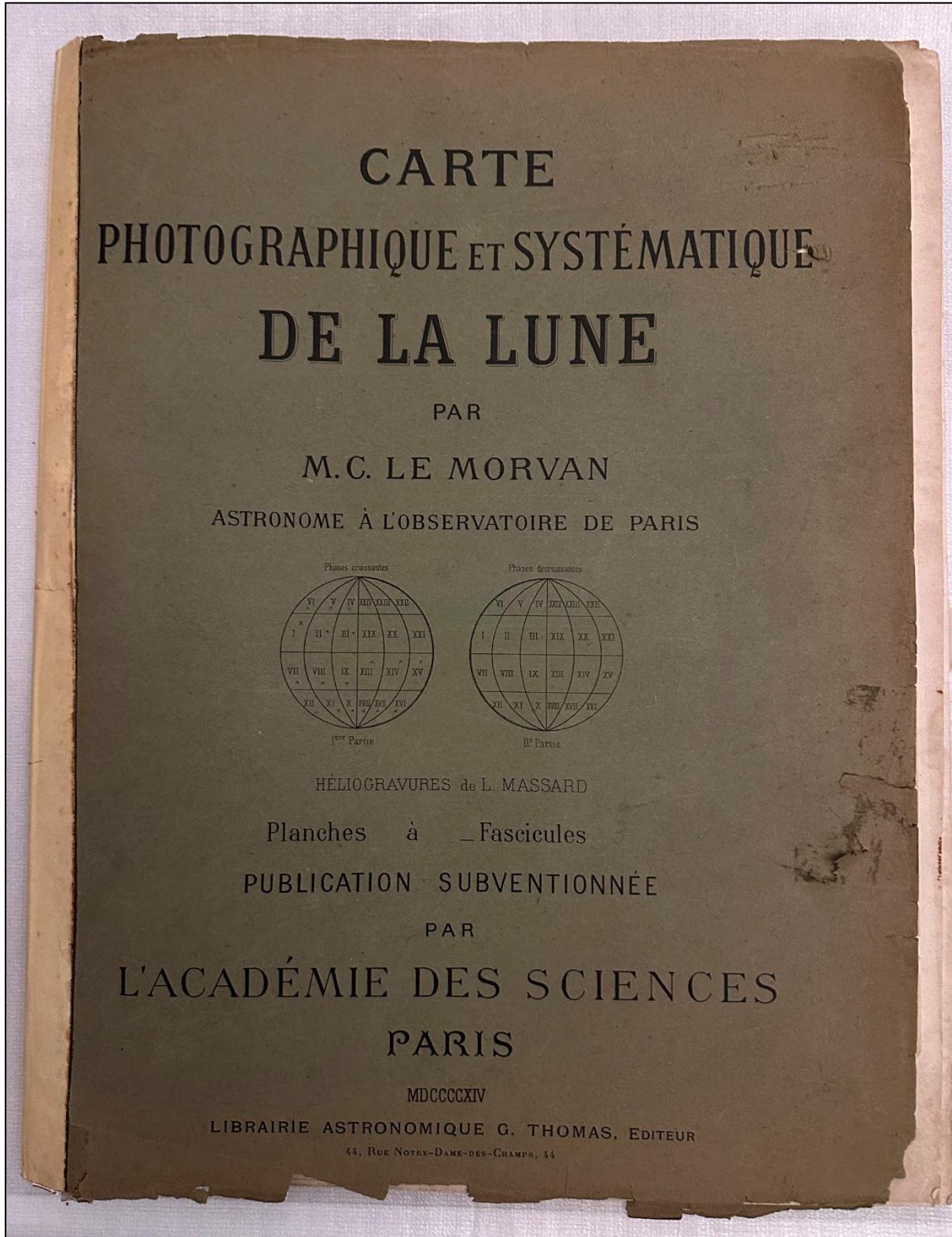


Figure 2 - Charles Le Morvan, *Carte Photographique et Systématique de la Lune* (1914). Author's copy.

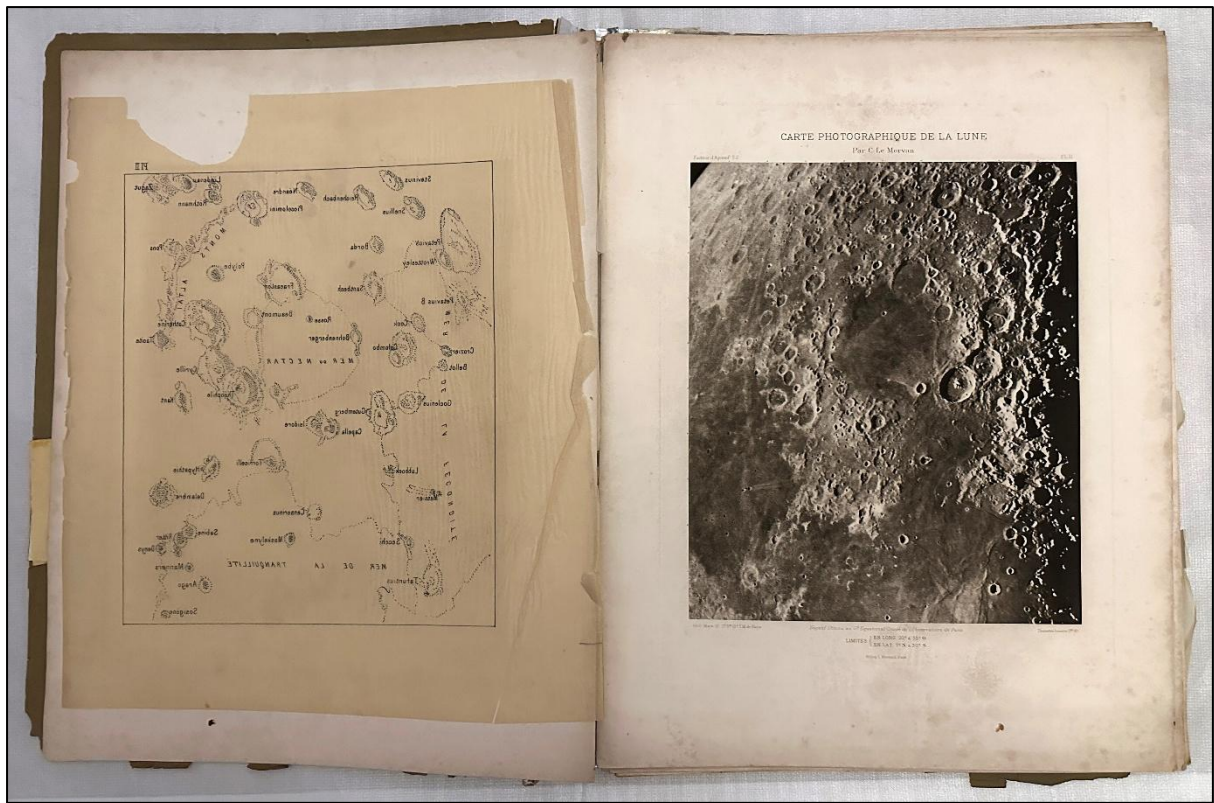


Figure 3 - Charles Le Morvan, *Carte Photographique et Systématique de la Lune* (1914). Author's copy.

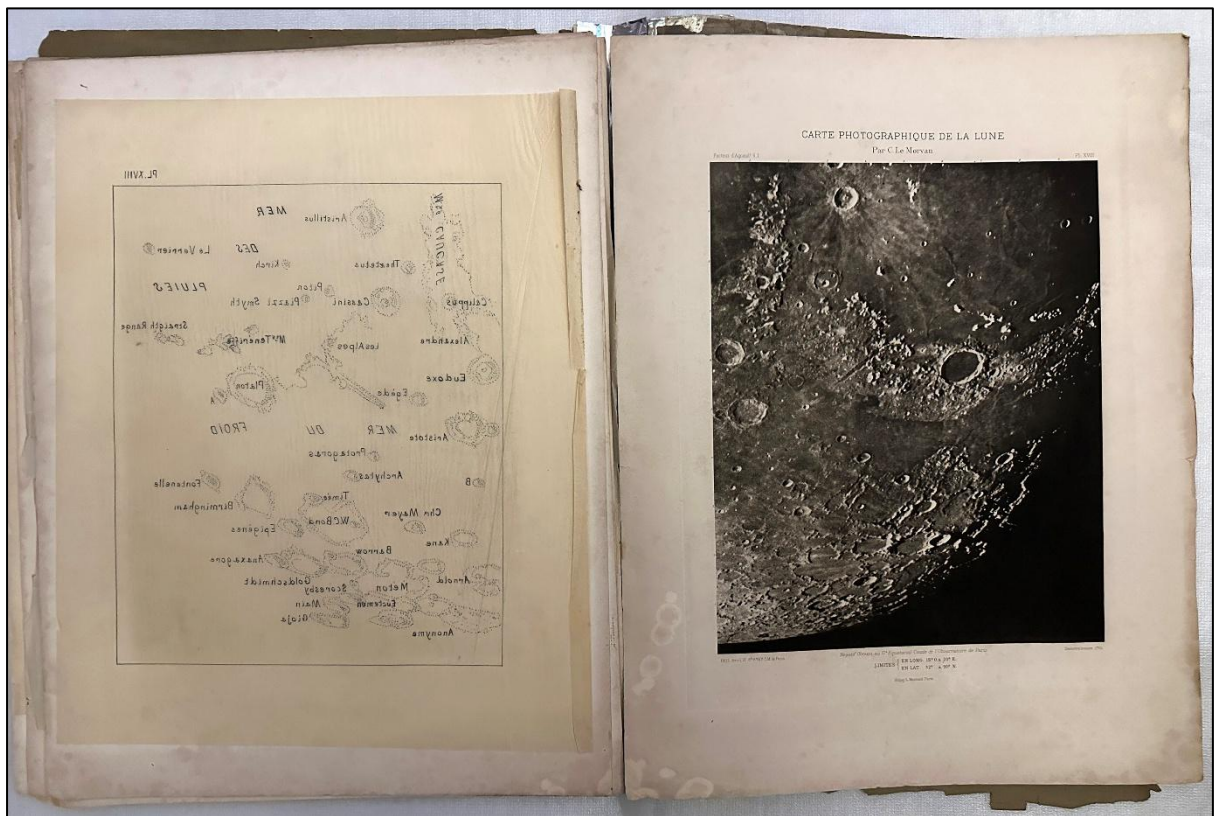


Figure 4 - Charles Le Morvan, *Carte Photographique et Systématique de la Lune* (1914). Author's copy.