This year is the 600th birthday of the University of Franche-Comté, the 10th university created in France in 1423. For @IDLofficial I gave a talk on optics history here since the science faculty was created in 1845. First batch of tweets follow; text in English, slides in French.



The story begins with our project with @SSAC_Univfc to save the lab archives that date back over 100 years. We found many old cans of photographic negatives from the 1970s and one was especially intriguing – who were these "ancestors"?



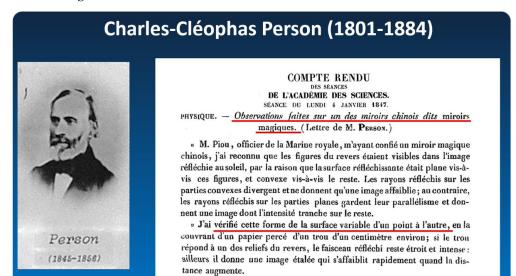


This single roll of film kicked off a 6 month study! It contained in it a photograph showing portraits of all the Chairs of Physics since 1845! (The dates in the photo show when they occupied their posts in Besançon.) Now for the detective work. Who were they?



The first Chair of Physics was Charles-Cléophas Person (1801-1884) in post from 1845-1856. He published the first optics-related paper from the university in 1847, explaining how

"Chinese Magic Mirrors" worked.

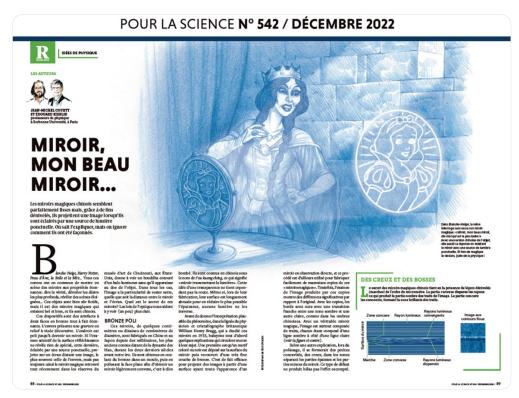


These "magic" mirrors yield the usual virtual image from the front surface but can also project a real image of a motif on the rear. Michael Berry calls this a Laplacian image @jmcourty has an article & video all about them!

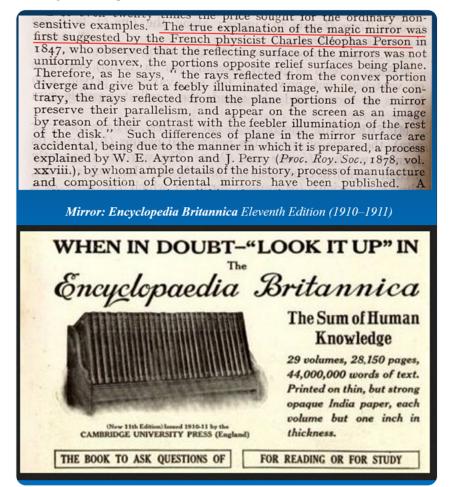
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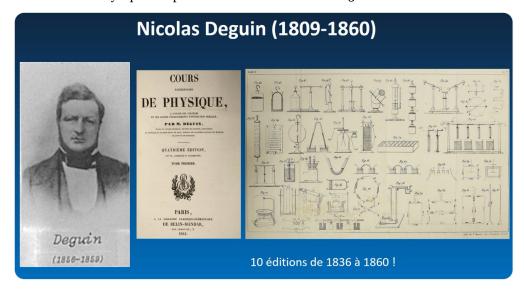
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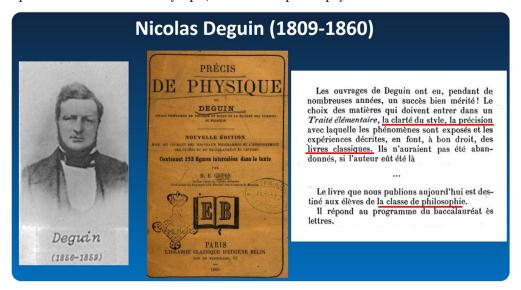
That Person's explanation was correct was even noted in the famous 1911 Encyclopedia @Britannica (explanation for the young - this is a bit like Wikipedia or Google but printed out & bound together in alphabetical order...)



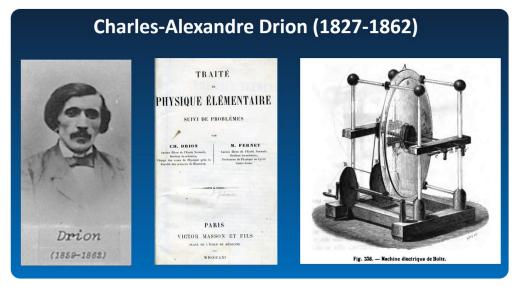
Nicolas Deguin (1809-1860) was the next Chair, in post from 1856-1859. He was best known for his textbook which had accurate illustrations of experimental apparatus. His Cours Elémentaire de Physique was published in 10 editions from 1836 to 1860!



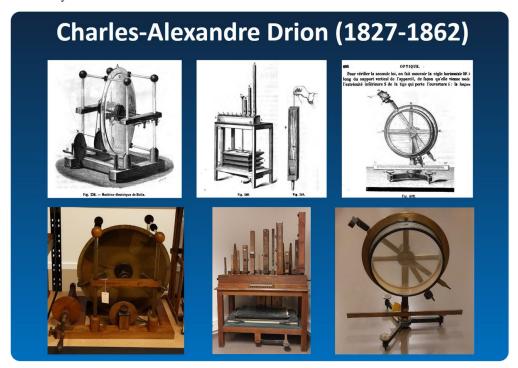
Even years after he died, his textbook was so well-liked that it was simplified and republished as a "Precis de Physique," destined for philosophy students!



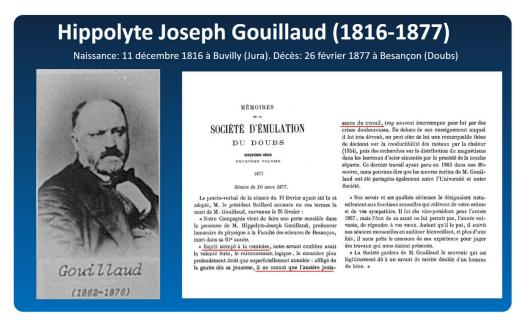
Charles-Alexandre Drion (1827-1862) was the next Chair, in post from 1859-1862, and he was also known for a textbook (with Fernet). This was reprinted in 13 editions from 1861 to 1900, and contains over 650 illustrations. You can easily find it online.



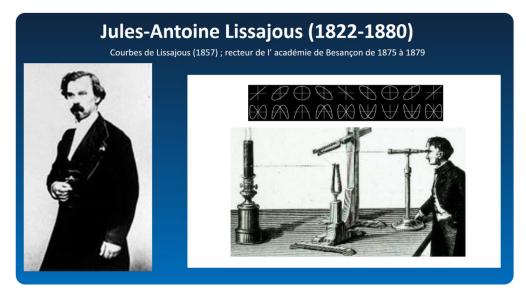
What is really fantastic is that we can compare Drion's illustrations with the instruments in our museum collection, and thus understand what they were used for! Some of these still work today!



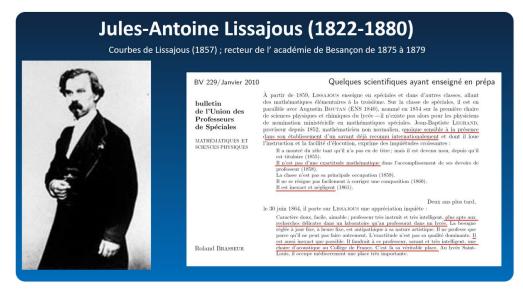
Hippolyte Joseph Gouillaud (1816-1877) was the next Chair, in post from 1862-1876. He has the distinction of being the first franc-comtois in the post! He had a hard life though, with his obituary noting that because of illness "he knew only the austere pleasure of work"...



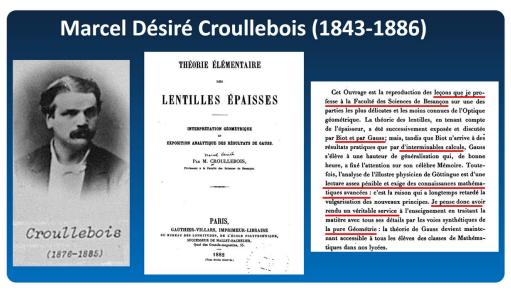
Now an interlude. Not a Chair but a physicist well known to all. Jules-Antoine Lissajous (1822-1880) was Rector of the Academy of Besançon from 1875-1879. He published his work on Lissajous Figures in 1857 (using optics - mirrors on tuning forks). We have a set in our museum.



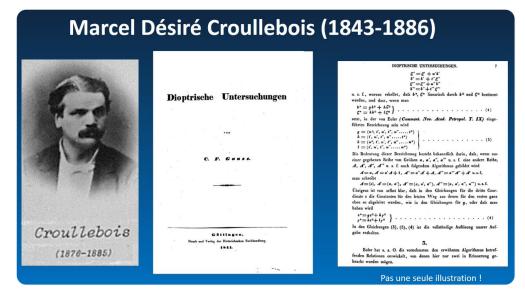
Lissajous was evidently not someone who placed a priority on his teaching. Before being named Rector, he taught at a lycée. His head at the time implies that he was too inexact to teach at a school, but on the other hand, he was ideal for the Collège de France!



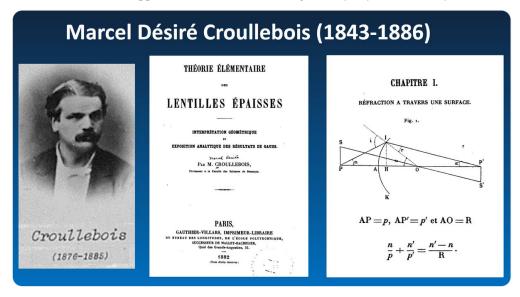
Marcel Désiré Croullebois (1843-1886) was the next Chair, in post from 1876-1885. He wrote an early text on geometrical optics, and didn't hold back from criticising other well-known authors of the time for the intractability of their efforts!



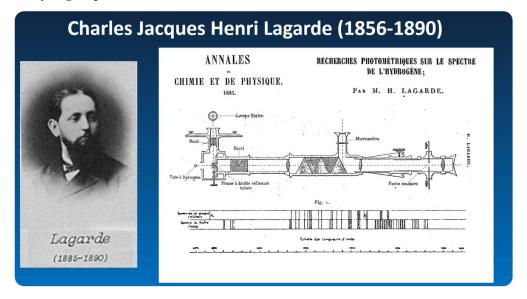
To be fair, when reading Gauss you can see what he means!



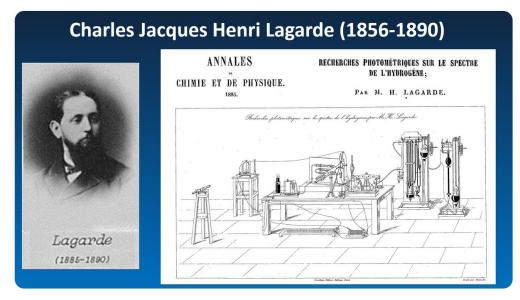
Whereas Croullebois's approach could indeed be recognized by any student today ...



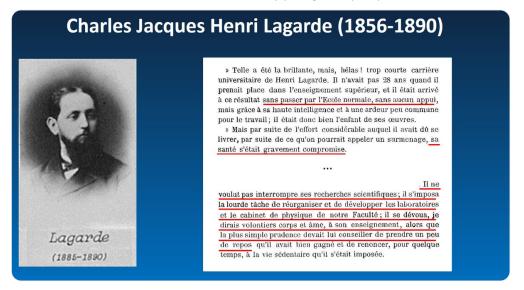
Charles Jacques Henri Lagarde (1856-1890) was the next Chair, in post from 1885-1890. His research reflects the changing face of physics, and he performed precision measurements of the Hydrogen spectrum.



And it's clear that they really liked complex 3D figures to show experimental setups even way back then!

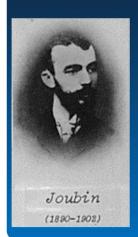


Lagarde seems to have made his own way through academia through talent and hard work, but it seems that this took its toll, and he died very young at only 34 years old.



Paul Jules Marie Joubin (1862-1941) was the next Chair, in post at Besançon from 1890-1902. Again we see how his research mirrors the evolution in optics around in the late 19th century ...

Paul Jules Marie Joubin (1862-1941)



J. de Phys., 2º série, t. VIII. (Février 1889.)

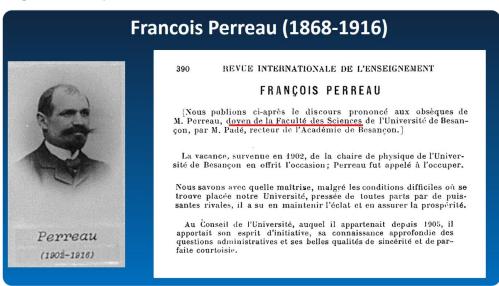
SUR LA DISPERSION ROTATOIRE MAGNÉTIQUE;

PAR M. P. JOUBIN.

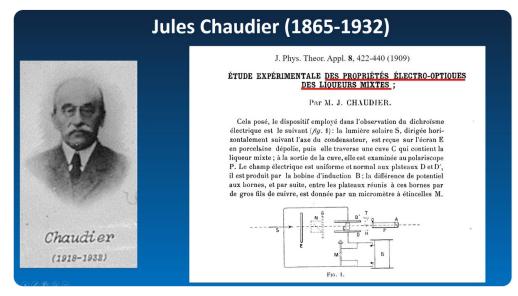
Soit une vibration rectiligne polarisée faisant partie d'une onde plane tombant sur un milieu réfringent. Si ce milieu n'est soumis à aucune force extérieure agissant sur la distribution intérieure de l'éther, telle qu'une force magnétique. cette vibration va passer sans altération, sauf un changement dans sa vitesse de propagation, et à sa sortie restera polarisée dans le même plan. A la place

L'expérience de Faraday a montré que l'influence d'un champ magnétique pouvait être la cause de ce changement de phase; il ne reste plus qu'à calculer sa grandeur.

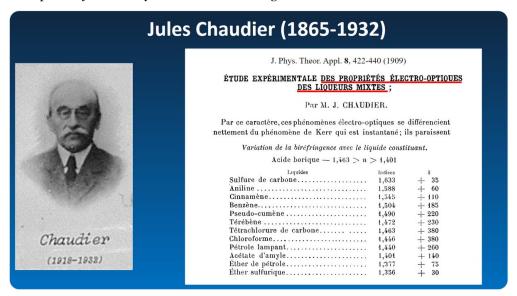
Francois Perreau (1868-1916) was the next Chair, in post at Besançon from 1902-1916. He focussed on university administration, doing quite a good job apparently, showing "sincerity and perfect courtesy"!



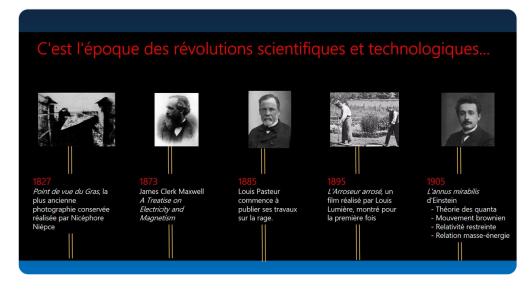
Jules Chaudier (1865-1932) was the next Chair, in post at Besançon from 1918-1932. Again reflecting the evolution in optics, he studied the electro-optic properties of various "liqueurs"...



... but probably not those you would drink as a digestif!



That's it for this batch of Twitter-bios. More will follow during the week. Let's conclude this part with a reflection on the amazing scientific development (local & international) witnessed by those studying physics in the 19th century!



Was surprised absinthe was not in the list 😀

@threadreaderapp Unroll

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