

The full text of the botanical letters of the Norwegian phycologist Mikael H. Foslie is now available online: a brief description

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Mikael Heggelund Foslie (1855–1909) was an internationally renowned phycologist and expert on the systematics of non-geniculate coralline red algae at the turn of 19th century (Fremstad 2006). During his career as a phycologist, Foslie engaged in an extensive international correspondence. The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) University Library in Trondheim Norway (<https://www.ntnu.edu/ub>) has holdings of 1959 botanical letters received by Foslie from the beginning of his career in 1884 until his death in 1909. Through this correspondence, Foslie established a network through which coralline algal specimens were received for identification from all parts of the world as gifts and for exchange. He also identified collections from expeditions, including the Swedish Albatross Expedition, the Dutch Siboga Expedition, the German Deep-Sea Expedition, and the British Percy Sladen Trust Expedition (see accounts in Fremstad 2006 for further details). The correspondence shows that on several occasions his work on the material led to joint authorships and he became a crucial part of the work of other researchers for whom identification of crustose corallines was very difficult.

In 2005, a printed catalogue of these letters was published (Thor, Johansen & Nilsen 2005), the main purpose of which was to make the information in the letters more readily available for coralline researchers, but also as a source for studies on the history of science, documenting the development of knowledge in this field and to illustrate the context of an international research career at the turn of 19th century. A possible interesting potential use of the information in the letters today may be in the field of ecology. The information in the letters may document the distribution of species at that time and allow a comparison with the current situation seen in a global perspective today. Most letters received by Foslie were handwritten in English, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish. However, the catalogue is presented in English. The structure of the printed catalogue was categorised into different fields to make the information in the letters for scientists and others available. These categories were a field for the date of the letter (DA), origin (OR), author (AU), people mentioned (MP), taxa mentioned in the letter (SP), and several other fields (RR, RS, RP, PV, and RV) to indicate the scientific discussion about the calcareous algae in the letters. In the electronic version, these categories are retained. The 1,959 letters have now been digitised. They are fully and easily readable in their original form.

Here I provide a brief explanation of how to use the resource:

1. Go to <https://ntnu.tind.io/search?ln=en>. The English language version of the Special Collections page appears. Please ensure that you are using the **full** screen of the browser so that all columns are apparent.
2. Enter “Foslie” in the search box and click on the “Search button”. A new page appears.
3. Scroll down and tick the box next to “Mikael H. Foslie” in the listing on left side of page. A new page will appear. A list of 1959 letters sorted by AU (=Author) appears. The Creator list seen on the left side is sorted by the number of letters received by Foslie. Weber-van Bosse is on top with 105 letters. Please note that on less than full screens, the list (column) on the left may be hidden. An alternative is to use the blue options button at the top right.
4. Click on “show all” to get a complete list of letters received by Foslie. Letters with the same number are sorted internally alphabetically. Each letter has its own page with more detailed information.



5. Scroll through the list of persons; tick the box next to person whose correspondence is required (e.g., “Reinbold, August Theodor”). All letters/cards from that person appears. Information about content is given to right of each document, including a date.
6. Scroll through letters or cards, then click on desired letter or card. The letter or card opens on a new page and each page or the letter or card can be read in sequence. In addition, further information occurs below the document.
7. To download, scroll down to Files. Each page of the letter or card can be downloaded separately by clicking on the relevant “Download” button.

I hope that this resource will be helpful to coralline and other taxonomists working with the Foslie names worldwide.

Thor, E., Johansen, S, Nilsen, L.S. (2005). The collection of botanical letters to Mikael H. Foslie in the Gunnerus Library: a catalogue. *Gunneria* 78: [1]–270. [Available in PDF format at <https://www.ntnu.no/museum/gunneria> and on ResearchGate].

Fremstad, E. (Ed.) 2006. Mikael Foslie. His life and science. *Gunneria* 79: [1]–66. [Also available at <https://www.ntnu.no/museum/gunneria>]