

## **ABC AND 'WORLD NEWS TONIGHT' TAKE OVER WITH CURIOUS WORLD MAPS FROM CURIOUS SOFTWARE**

**NEW YORK:** From the name alone, it's clear that ABC's "World News Tonight" is all about global perspective: for anchor Peter Jennings and the entire production team, showing what is happening in the world also means showing where the action is. With the addition of Curious World Maps from Curious Software to their graphics suite, "World News Tonight" has raised the power of their broadcast maps to a new high.

"The moment I saw Curious World Maps I realized it was exactly what I needed," says Paul Brodie, Art Director for ABC News. "It's a flexible, user-friendly system that quickly does incredibly detailed, animated maps. As a piece of software that I can simply put onto a PC and get moving, it's perfect. The way Curious animates maps is a huge step forward for us and the information we can provide to our viewers."

Since implementing Curious World Maps into its on-air graphics suite, ABC and "World News Tonight" has tapped the software's full potential for enhanced detail, style and efficiency. Equipped with built-in vector databases of the entire world, Curious World Maps has detailed outline data for countries, states and counties, and over 150,000 place names including towns, mountains, rivers, lakes, roads and streets. Worldwide relief data is also a part of the Curious package. Importing street, building and land information, along with high-resolution local terrain data means that Curious users can zoom from a spinning globe down to a single building in record time.

An energetic personality that brings a painter's eye to his position, Brodie saw that the Curious package fit in well with his mission at "World News Tonight". "Our view is that we're the flagship show of ABC News, and we're constantly looking for things like Curious Maps to raise the quality level," Brodie explains. "I'm very lucky coming to ABC News, because the design here is the most intelligent-looking. I think that the goal of ABC News is to give a different point of view: If you don't get the information over, then it defeats the objective, regardless of how nice everything looks."

"Peter Jennings has a big thing with maps. He loves intelligent, concise maps that clearly illustrate what he's talking about without being too fussy or over-the top. At 'World News Tonight' we want to explain where in the world every story is. Our challenge is to show where every story is in relation to America, and a still map can't do that anywhere near as effectively as our animations from Curious World Maps can."

At the heart of Curious World Maps' animation capabilities is a highly flexible full key frame system. Maps created by a "World News Tonight" graphic artist can be zoomed in or out, panned or rotated, with details and colors added in and out, and text added. An unlimited number of layers can also be added, including images or movies with or without alpha channel, video clips and text. The resulting animations can be output straight to video, or as movie files or sequences of images.

While the package has helped transform the way “World News Tonight” looks to its millions of viewers, the efficiency of Curious World Maps has made an equally big impact on the show from behind the scenes. “Curious has freed up a lot of personnel and machinery that previously went to making maps,” says Brodie. “They always wanted maps on this show no matter how long it took, even if that called for two artists working for three hours.

“Now those two artists are freed up to do other stuff, and my department can quite confidently offer up five maps for one show, instead of just one. We very rarely make a still map – there’s no reason not to make it move, because it takes so little time to animate them with Curious. Someone can request a fully animated map right before we go to air for a breaking story and it’ll be there.”

With Curious installed on a desktop running Windows NT, “World News Tonight” depends on the software to help create a sharp lead-in to many of the nightly segments. Once the production team has decided which maps will be needed for that evening’s broadcast, the Curious World Maps have a relatively simple path to air.

“We tend to use them as the introduction to each piece, to explain where the correspondent is in the world,” Brodie says. “Then we go to the desktop with Curious on it, and the system is ready to go for ‘World News Tonight’: Our colors, our relief, the size of the type, the look of the maps is all set, and it’s usually a ten-minute job for our operator to create an entire animated map from start to finish. To explain where the story is in relation to America, we’ll put the first key frame there, with the end key frame in Yemen, for example, where the story picks up. We’ll add the relevant type, which is set to our style, select the level of highlight for how much the country stands out from the surrounding ones, and press ‘Go’.”

Once the map has been rendered in the NT system, it goes over ABC’s network to their on-air DDR, where it’s transferred in as a TARGA sequence, with a 120-frame animation typically taking less than two minutes to load. From there, it’s just a matter of waiting for the director’s cue. “At that point you’re good to go,” Brodie says. “Ready to air live.”

Just as important is the repeatability that Curious World Maps brings to Brodie at “World News Tonight”, so he can count on a consistent appearance for his maps, no matter who’s making them on any given day. “That’s the beauty of it,” he confirms. “‘World News Tonight’ now has a style that’s set in stone. Curious allows us to set a style that can be used over and over, which over time will help make the show instantly recognizable to people. Besides being informative, these political and topographical maps have become a signature for the show.”

Both as a tool for creating truly useful information graphics, and as a pacesetter for the recent redesign of “World News Tonight”, Curious World Maps gives ABC a distinct edge in the push to create a newscast without boundaries. “I’m in direct competition with the other art directors of all the other news sources on the air, so you have to use every tool you can find as a designer to make the best graphics,” Paul Brodie concludes. “To

discover a system like Curious, that can make terrific maps at top speed, is a big part of the game.”

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