

AI-Powered Court Preparation



The 36 Group is a London-based multi-specialist set of barristers' Chambers, with over 150 barristers, mediators and arbitrators, as well as operations in Singapore and Hong Kong.

London barristers' chambers, The 36 Group, recently deployed Luminance in advance of a high-profile and historic murder trial at the Old Bailey. An investigating team of 20 people, including forensic experts, former police officers, solicitors and barristers needed to review over 10,000 documents in order to decide the defence argument and evidence ahead of the murder trial.

The initial murder investigation had taken place in 1994 before a cold case review was opened in 2014, meaning a huge amount of paperwork had been generated over decades. The defence team needed to analyse a vast and diverse body of material, including handwritten witness statements, police notes, court orders, and unused material. Previously, The 36 Group had relied on the Crown Court Digital Case System (CCDCS), an online platform provided for instructing counsel in England and Wales, to access, prepare and present information for court proceedings. However, as charges were brought against the defendant in early 2020, the team suddenly needed a platform that would support remote working due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The CCDCS was unable to provide a centrally accessible platform and further lacked the collaboration tools necessary for such a large investigating team.

“We had been served thousands of pages of evidence and material that we had to digest in a limited number of days. Luminance is invaluable, since this phase of trial preparation takes a very long time using only manual methods.”



Sally Hobson,
Barrister

KEY RESULTS:



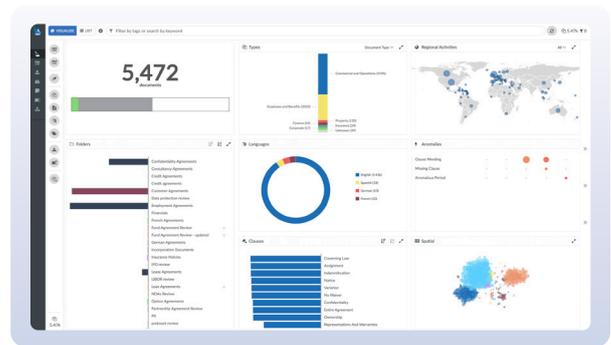
£50,000 Saved
In Four Working Weeks



10,000+ Documents
Reviewed



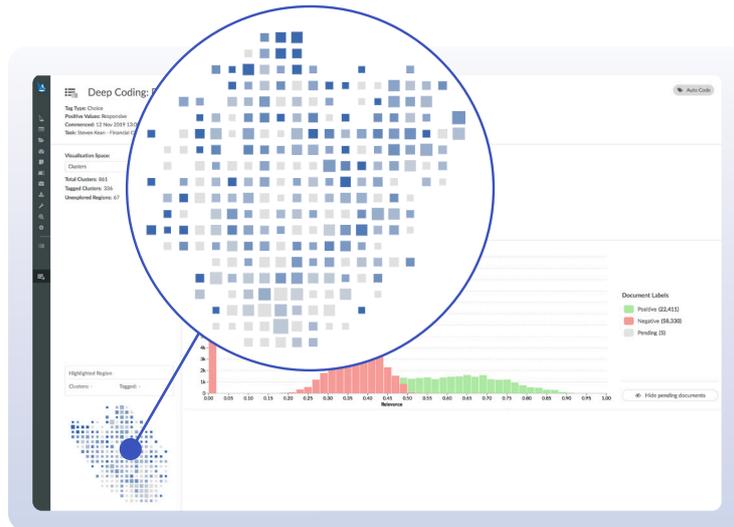
Court-compliance Documents
Produced



Understand the entire dataset at a glance with Luminance's AI-powered data visualisation

Urgently in need of an alternative technology to expedite the review ahead of trial, The 36 Group turned to Luminance. As Luminance's AI is deployed via the cloud deployment, the defence team was able to upload the entire dataset to the platform in a matter of minutes, meaning each team member could easily and securely access all 10,000 documents from wherever they were based.

Following document upload, Luminance's unique blend of supervised and unsupervised machine learning algorithms were able to quickly read and form an understanding of the diverse body of material, providing The 36 Group with an all-encompassing overview of the dataset. With key information displayed across a series of easy-to-navigate, interactive 3D visualisations, the barristers could rapidly understand their dataset and further investigate specific areas or individuals of interest.



Luminance observes the coding actions of the team, flagging where the coding of a document appears anomalous compared to how similar documents have been coded in case this warrants a further review

As The 36 Group continued to interact with the documents, Luminance’s advanced supervised machine learning algorithms, which powers its ‘Deep Coding’ functionality, could learn from the lawyers’ expertise when identifying further documents relevant to their investigation. This approach was particularly effective when reviewing witness statements and officer reports, which traditionally require barristers to manually open and review each document to understand what they contain due to opaque file naming systems, such as the so-called ‘S-numbers’ commonly used by the police.

For instance, The 36 Group searched the dataset for all references to a pair of black shoes, which had been recovered from a bin during the initial investigation. The barristers wanted to establish continuity in witness statements about the shoes, such as establishing what had happened to them and who had spoken about them. By searching the term ‘black shoes’ in Luminance, the AI instantly brought up all documents referencing them, allowing The 36 Group to work out whether there was continuity across the various testimonies.

Luminance’s conceptual understanding of information also proved critical, allowing the team to surface documents according to statistical similarity to ensure that no key piece of information could be left undiscovered. This was important when preparing to cross-examine witnesses such as Ruth Neave, the victim’s mother. Luminance not only pulled up material mentioning ‘mother’ but conceptually similar terms such as ‘mum’. The 36 Group noted that when they conducted similar searches in the CCDCS, the time spent on the review was not only considerably longer than with Luminance, but the CCDCS also failed to pick up key information which Luminance had instantly surfaced.

Using Luminance, The 36 Group estimated that they were able to save four working weeks and £50,000 in costs between the beginning of the review and the disclosure phase. When it came to compiling cross-examination bundles during the later phases of trial preparation, this took mere minutes since Luminance had already surfaced the relevant material.

“It’s a brilliant software – if I had a case where I needed to use it again, I absolutely would. In fact, it would be a real leap forward if all defence teams had access to it.”