

Internet site provides access to inner-sanctum of Spain's 'trial of the century'

By Doreen Carvajal
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The company's usual audience consists of the Spanish professional class: judges, lawyers and accountants who pay more than €2,000 a year for a subscription to a Datadiar portable flash-drive database of legal information, Globalius.

But with the start of the trial, Datadiar's commercial director, Rosa Martinez Casas, said the company was beginning to reach a global audience.

Cortijo, the manager, said the company planned to add tools including a search function and highlights of past testimonies.

"It's going to be better," Cortijo said. "We are going to have more and more videos every day and we have a lot of ideas."

To maintain its neutrality, Datadiar has avoided creating chat forums in connection with the legal issues that it is raising. The site does offer a series of primers to explain elements of the legal process, from the concept of the presumption of innocence to a three-dimensional diagram of the seating map of the courtroom for its 46 defense lawyers, prosecutors and translators.

Over the past 10 years, investors have plowed more than €50 million into the company, which did not break even until 2003 and now is turning a profit, Cortijo said.

So far the company has not sought advertising for the legal information it is offering on its portal, but that is one alternative under discussion, she said, in addition to the company's subscription model, along with creating similar court-coverage operations in other countries.

Cortijo said it was too early to calculate how much it would cost the company to offer streaming television online for free, although she said that new technology helped to reduce costs. The portal generally attracts mostly users from Spanish-speaking countries, with Spain ranked first, followed by Argentina and Mexico.

"It may be difficult to understand why we do this for free," she said, noting that the company believes it is a service for the world that is watching. "We are objective. We are in the middle. We are only lawyers and professionals and offering information. It's not like television."

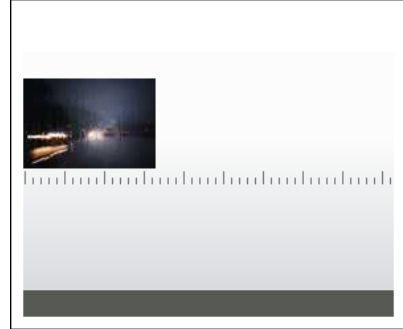
- Live week day coverage of Madrid terrorist train bombings.
- Opening day testimony of the suspected "intellectual author" of the Madrid bombings, Rabei Osman Sayed Ahmed or "Mohamed the Egyptian."
- Diagram of the Madrid courtroom with live camera coverage of 29 people on trial in connection with the March 11, 2004 rush hour train bombings.



Doreen Carvajal for the International Herald Tribune

The scene inside the pressroom of the Madrid court, which is opening the trial to the public via the Internet. Web video is making it possible to shine new light on courts.

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