Scalable Medallion Lakehouse with MLOps on Azure Databricks

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Abstract

This Medallion Architecture design and implementation leverages Databricks and Azure technology while aligning with MLOps principles to engender a comprehensive, scalable solution for enterprise data intelligence, a topic of increasing relevance across commercial sectors. As organizations expand their bases of data assets, the need for an integrated framework that supports both analytics and machine learning with a clear vision for data intelligence emerges as a priority.

Today, machine learning is applied across many industries and is advancing rapidly. However, the majority of ML models remain on pilot status or just a few have been productized. Furthermore, their use, maintenance, and governance sprinkle a wide array of manual and poorly controlled actions. The Achilles heel of these initiatives that are such a big promise of added value is the implementation of a continuous integration/continuous deployment (CI/CD) flow. ML-Ops is the answer to these impediments and allows exploring ways to build ML products properly.

Keywords: Medallion Architecture, Databricks, Azure Cloud, MLOps, Data Intelligence, Data Engineering, Data Pipelines, Data Governance, Data Architecture, Machine Learning, Model Deployment, CI CD, Model Lifecycle, Data Processing, Scalable Systems, Analytics Systems, Cloud Platforms, Data Integration, Automation, Enterprise Data.

1. Introduction

Many contemporary organizations desire to harness wide-ranging and large-scale datasets to facilitate Machine Learning and generate value-added insights, often referred to as “data for decisions.” The demand for comprehensive data intelligence typically extends beyond traditional Business Intelligence reporting and encompasses, among others, Predictive Analytics and Artificial Intelligence-based recommendations or actions. Scalable Data Intelligence is challenging, however, partly due to enterprise data landscapes that have grown disparate over the

decades and partly due to the changing demands of Predictive Analytics and AI for multisource training datasets that conform to the needs of the Algorithms. Nevertheless, many enterprises have invested heavily to implement a Data-analytical Ecosystem aimed at supporting Business Intelligence yet have found it inadequate to meet these more expansive and deeper needs.

At the same time, recent information Technology Paradigms such as Cloud-based Infrastructure, Cloud-native Data Engineering, MLOps, DataOps and the Databricks Medallion Architecture top the Gartner Hype Cycle and offer promise for enhancing Scalable Data Intelligence. This study designs a Databricks Medallion Architecture within an Azure Cloud ecosystem, and explores how MLOps, Data Governance and Quality frameworks, Performance Engineering and DevOps are embedded in the Architecture to place them within reach of enterprises. By illustrating industry-agnostic reference enterprise use cases, and domain-specific enhancements together with pertinent best-practice guidance, the study ultimately offers practical assistance to enterprises seeking to leverage Azure and Databricks for scalable Data Intelligence.

2. Architectural Principles and Objectives

The Medallion Architecture's design and implementation take an MLOps and DevOps perspective, focusing on scalability and performance testing before any managed services operationalize the DataOps. The following sections describe the architecture built and tested on Microsoft Azure and Databricks. A complete reference architecture of a multi-cloud enterprise–grade Medallion Enterprise Architecture is described. The focus is on industry-agnostic elements, extending to industry-specific domains when necessary. Important design considerations include integration into Azure Data Lake Storage Gen2, Delta Lake compatibility, workload testing before MLOps operationalization, metadata completeness for compliance purposes, built-in tested data quality, CI/CD capabilities for data and MLOps workflow, cost and performance optimization, and housing Enterprise Data Intelligence use cases leveraging the Enterprise Data Intelligence Thin Data Foundation.

The following sections examine individual components of the architecture from a high level, testing the relevant workload before move to the operationalization phase. By using resources and services from Databricks, Microsoft Azure, and a set of open-source and cross-cloud technologies, it is possible to create and test a scalable Medallion Architecture with multiple operationalization pathways, covering enterprise–level DataOps and MLOps workflows and presenting the DataOps components as a Thin Data Foundation for enterprise Data

Intelligence use cases. The delivery of workloads is designed to assist in architecting the Medallion framework and demonstrate enterprise usage patterns outside the core industry and domain reference architecture discussions.

2.1. Key Architectural Considerations and Goals

Data-driven AI and ML enable scalable, efficient insights and automation for organizations. To make enterprise data truly intelligent, it is essential not only to democratize self-service analytics but also to deploy reliable and compliant models that can be automatically retrained and refined with suitable data. Expanding a lakehouse for analytics, data science, and model experimentation, validation, and operationalization becomes crucial for integrating analytics and operational models into the enterprise backbone. However, Research-Focused MLOps frameworks cannot safely provide a production-ready, enterprise-grade solution that follows GDPR, internal quality standards, and regulations. An MLOps-ready Medallion Architecture for Azure, Databricks, and Azure DevOps that scales across use cases along with performance, cost, and governance compliance operationalizes and supports production-ready solution deployments.

As ML-driven product development grows in power and impact, taking part in these experimentation cycles with model-training responsibilities following the principles of data intelligence becomes more commonplace. But Enterprise MLOps thus far neglects considerations, robustness, and support of model-testing pipelines that encompass these use cases when supporting Data and Model Ops together. These model-testing use cases extend the Data Preparation for Testing pattern, which addresses data quality testing for Data Ops pipelines, to CI/CD pipelines for ML models and update the ideal DevOps-CI/CD for Data and Models framework to incorporate batch-testing pipelines.

P-ISSN: 3050-9734
E-ISSN: 3050-9742
EUROPEAN ADVANCED JOURNAL FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
VOLUME: 02 ISSUE: 02
RECEIVED: APRIL 25 REVISED: MAY 14 ACCEPTED: MAY 28 PUBLISHED: JUNE 17

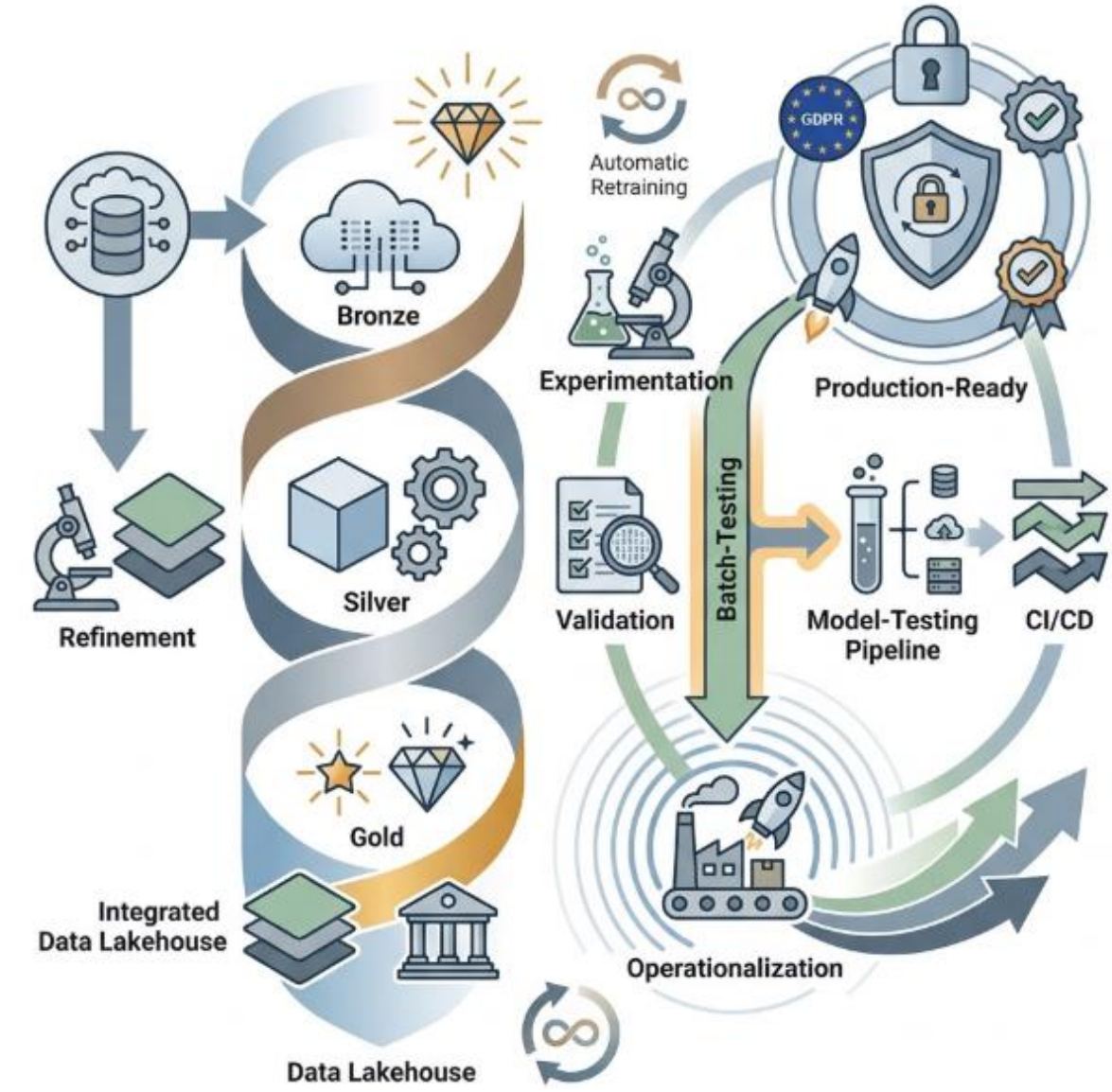


Fig 1: Enterprise MLOps: Integrating Batch-Testing and Data Intelligence for Scalable, Compliant Model Lifecycles

3. Methodology

Enterprises looking to enhance data intelligence capabilities can address Cloud Strategy, Data Mesh, DataOps, MLOps, Data Governance, Data Quality, and Data Security by implementing a tailored end-to-end Medallion Architecture that runs on Azure and uses Cost-Effective Delta Lake, Databricks, and CI/CD principles.

The study proposes a Data Intelligence scoping and scaffolding methodology and a complete reference architecture that introduces a cohesive operating model for enterprise Data Intelligence. The architecture enables an integrated set of industrial use cases that manage predictive normalisation and scaling across the enterprise and optimally satisfy Cloud Strategy and Cost-based principles for Scalable Enterprise Data Intelligence. The solutions are built and structured as-on Azure, using Azure Data Lake Storage Gen2, Databricks services and frameworks, an operating model for DataOps for Data Intelligence Services, Data Quality Governance adherent processes, and elastic performance tuning."

3.1. Comprehensive Overview of Reference Architecture

Reference Architecture Overview

An end-to-end reference architecture for an enterprise deployment-ready medallion architecture on Azure and Databricks, incorporating well-defined operational guidelines and best practices for data, Azure ML models, and Delta Live Tables (DLT). Targeting industry-agnostic data intelligence use cases—such as data science exploratories, detection of process anomalies in transactional systems, monitoring and forecasting of known time series, and image processing—enabling technologies and patterns for domain-agnostic deployments across sectors are described.

Operationalization and MLOps practices for ready-to-use Data Science Environments at Scale on Azure with Databricks provide structural guidelines for setting up, using, and deploying enterprise-grade CI/CD pipelines for data decisions in Databricks using Delta Live Tables (DLT) together with Continuous Integration/Continuous Deployment (CI/CD) of Azure Machine Learning (Azure ML) models. These enable data scientists, widely considered data platform custodians, operating significant Data Quality Management (DQM), Data Governance (DG), and Data Engineering (DE) activities, to work effectively and efficiently while ensuring enterprise-level Reliability Engineering (RE) of Data as a Product (DaaP) answerability.

Layer	Main role	Input state	Output state	Main controls
Bronze	Raw ingestion and persistence	Raw structured / semi-structured / unstructured data	Stored raw records with ingestion history	Ingestion logging, metadata capture, initial quality screening
Silver	Cleaning, conformance, feature preparation	Bronze raw data	Clean, conformed, feature-ready data	Consistency checks, selective quality testing, feature engineering
Gold	Business-serving analytics and scoring	Silver conformed data	Aggregated analytic datasets, scoring outputs	Performance optimization, business-serving models, reporting
MLOps	Training, validation, deployment, monitoring	Silver features + labels	Versioned and monitored models	MLflow, testing, CI/CD, monitoring, retraining
Governance	Metadata, lineage, policy, compliance	All layers	Controlled, auditable data platform	Metadata catalog, lineage, policy enforcement, data quality

4. Objective of the Study

MLOps enables data science teams to treat machine learning as a product and to continuously train, deploy, and monitor models within DevOps practices. The combination with a medallion architecture empowers the end-to-end automation of the lifecycle of data, models, and products based on AI. A comprehensive reference architecture is provided for enterprise data intelligence in a cloud environment, with a focus on Databricks-based implementations. Besides describing an MLOps-ready medallion architecture, the design principles and operational guidelines streamline DevOps for data and models across industries.

A medallion architecture supports the data pipeline for enterprise data intelligence. Data is ingested, processed, and conformed on the Lakehouse-internal bronze and silver layers. In the bronze layer, data is ingested and stored upon arrival, whether raw, structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Any engineering required to build the lakehouse structure and prepare data for further processing occurs at this stage. Data quality checks determined by the UX- driven framework prune issues early in the data pipeline, while metadata handling enables DataOps practices. In the silver layer, data lakes and Delta Lake tables enable the processing of large-scale data lakes with a process--once-use-many strategy for clean, conformed, and feature-ready datasets for different business needs. Sele--ctive quality testing at this stage supports data regulatory requirements and serves the monitoring of the data pipeline.

Equation 1. Bronze to Silver data transformation

Let:

$$D_B = \text{raw Bronze data volume}$$

Suppose only a fraction q passes quality checks.

So after quality filtering:

$$D_B^{(clean)} = qD_B$$

Now let only a fraction c of the clean data successfully conform to enterprise rules.

So Silver data is:

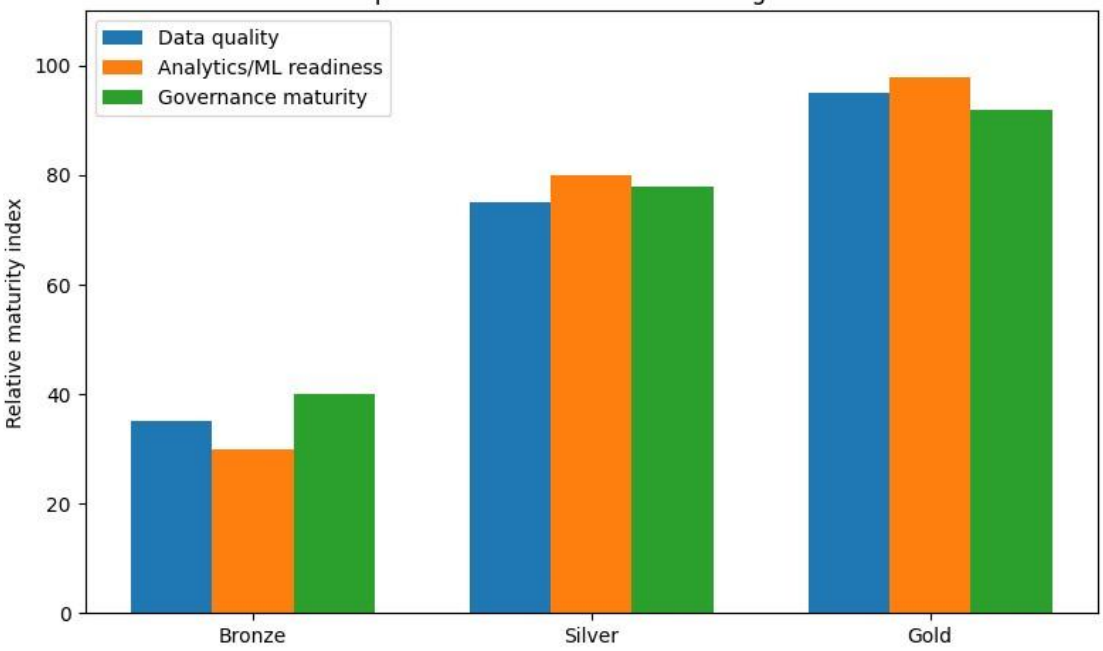
$$D_S = c \cdot D_B^{(clean)}$$

Substitute $D_B^{(clean)} = qD_B$:

$D_S = c(qD_B)$ $\boxed{D_S = qcD_B}$

P-ISSN: 3050-9734
E-ISSN: 3050-9742
EUROPEAN ADVANCED JOURNAL FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
VOLUME: 02 ISSUE: 02
RECEIVED: APRIL 25 REVISED: MAY 14 ACCEPTED: MAY 28 PUBLISHED: JUNE 17

Graph 1. Medallion Architecture Progression



4.1. Purpose and Goals of the Research

Leveraging academic knowledge and industry experience, the research examines best practices and capabilities for designing enterprise-ready solutions that enable dependable, high-quality, and scalable data and decision-making capabilities for the entire organization. The reference architecture defines and operationalizes a medallion architecture on Azure and Databricks for the storage, processing, management, and analysis of data, ensuring the integration of MLOps with the enterprise analytics data ecosystem. The focus is on transforming data into actionable intelligence, incorporating DevOps principles and enabling the deployment of enterprise-ready data solutions.

A medallion architecture is a widely adopted approach for integrating cloud storage and processing with a Delta Lake cloud data lakehouse. Combining the use of a medallion architecture with DevOps principles for data discovery, data quality, and data governance enables enterprise-ready, compliant, scalable, secure, and cost-effective solutions. Furthermore, a

focus on MLOps ensures that automation is provided not only for data ingestion and the creation of trusted data but also for end-to-end model management, enabling delivery of enterprise-consistent and legal-compliance services with minimal human intervention.

5. Research Summary

Designing a reference architecture suitable for MLOps and the medallion architecture specialized for data intelligence in a typical enterprise using Azure and Databricks is explored. All architectural principles and considerations are covered, followed by an overview of the reference architecture and a detailed description of the data ingestion and integration for the Bronze and Silver layers and their MLOps practices. The remaining aspects of the architecture—the Enterprise Data Lake—are summarized briefly.

Developing a reference architecture for a typical enterprise in its major industry segment—banking, insurance, telecommunications, retail, automotive—enables multiple deployments in similar organizations across industries, combined with a medallion architecture for enterprise data intelligence aligned with data mesh principles exploiting the Azure-Databricks data-and-MLOps ecosystem. All architectural principles and goals are first presented, followed by a comprehensive overview of the reference architecture, including the Bronze layer focused on data ingestion and preparation for Lakehouse integration and the Silver layer supporting confidence-ready data for analytics or ML-based use cases. The description concludes with a summary of the remaining Enterprise Data Lake aspects.

Metric	Formula	Interpretation
Silver output volume	$D_S = qcD_B$	Only quality-passing and conformed Bronze data becomes Silver
Gold output volume	$D_G = fD_S = fqcD_B$	Only feature/business-usable Silver data becomes Gold
Processing time	$T = \frac{D}{W\mu}$	More workers reduce runtime
Worker requirement	$W \geq \frac{\lambda}{\mu}$	Capacity must at least match incoming load
Compute cost	$C = rWT$	Cost grows with workers and runtime

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VOLUME: 02 ISSUE: 02
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PUBLISHED: JUNE 17

Metric	Formula	Interpretation
Quality pass rate	$q = \frac{N_{pass}}{N_{total}}$	Basic data quality effectiveness
Metadata completeness	$M = \frac{m_{filled}}{m_{required}}$	Governance maturity indicator
Retraining trigger	Retrain if $A < A_{\min}$ or $d_m > \tau_m$ or $d_d > \tau_d$	Production control rule

6. Reference Architecture Overview

Functional areas are organized within a medallion architecture using rigorously data-driven principles that support the specifications of an MLOps-ready data-intelligence architecture designed as a reference for a scalable enterprise Azure-based deployment. The functional areas of the medallion architecture correspond to the way in which data undergoes evolution through staging from raw sources to production-ready formats. The reference architecture incorporates the complete stack of services provided by Microsoft Azure and leverage the Databricks Lakehouse Platform. It follows the design principles established in the earlier sections and the workflows implemented conform to the data-engagement requirements determined for the enterprise deployment, including:

• Bronze: Ingestion and Raw Data Management

• Silver: Cleaned, Conformed, and Feature-ready Data

• Gold: Business-serving, Aggregated, Analytic, and Scoring Data

• MLOPS: Model Training, Deployment, Management, and Quality Assurance

• Data Governance: Metadata Management and Data Quality Checking

• Scalability and Performance: Cost-efficient Sizing, Elasticity, and Load Bursting

• Operationalization and DevOps: CI/CD for Data and Models, Automated Monitoring, Alerting, and Incident Management.

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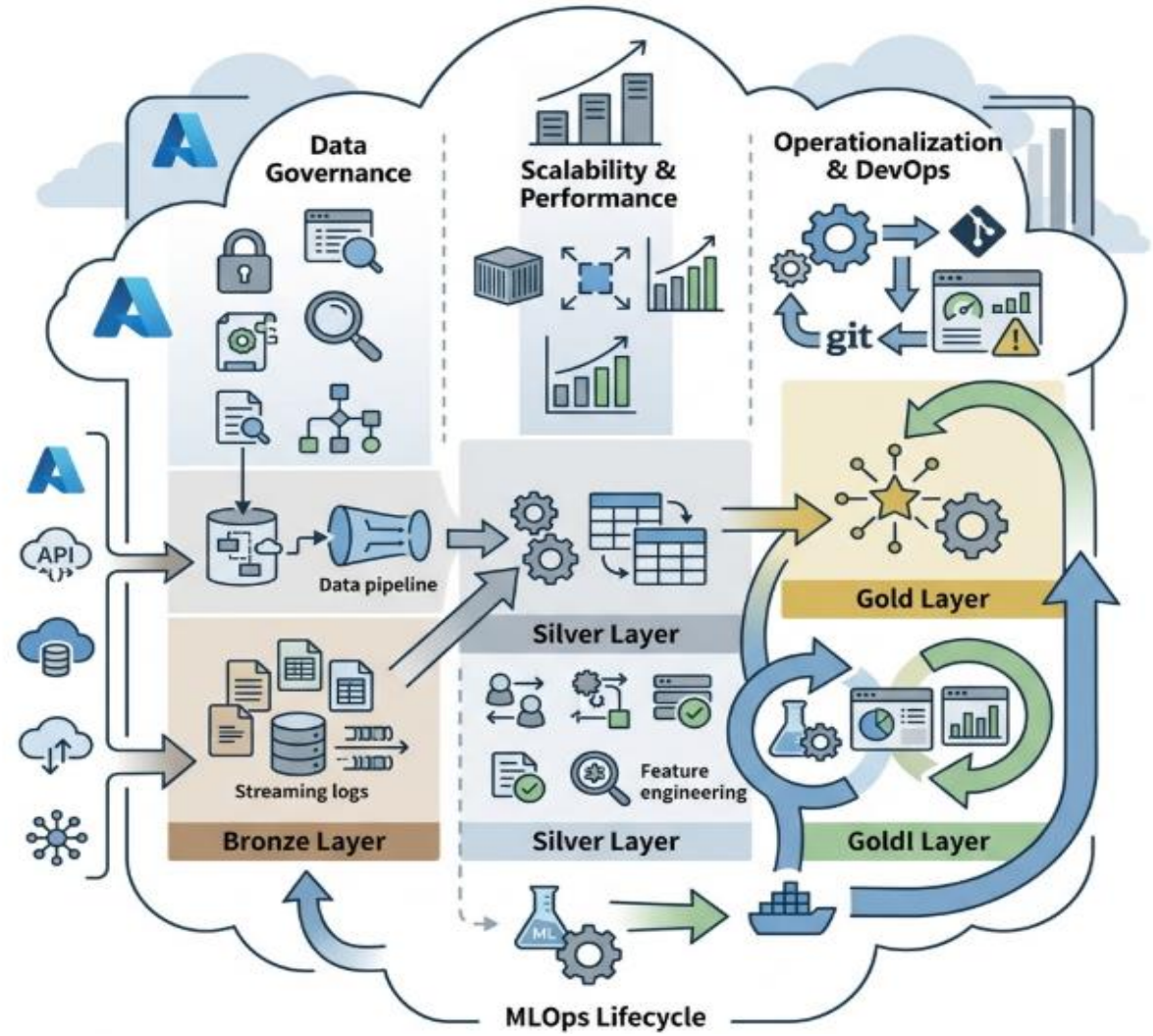


Fig 2: Design Patterns for MLOps-Ready Data Intelligence: An Enterprise Azure Reference Architecture Using Medallion-Based Databricks Lakehouse

6.1. Bronze Layer: Ingestion and Raw Data Management

Ingestion and management of original or subject data in the Bronze layer of the architectural design leverage Azure Data Factory for Data Lake ingestion and continuous ingestion use cases. Data from Data Lake storage is then read, executed, and transformed in Databricks and ingested in a Delta Table in the Bronze Layer of the Medallion Architecture.

The Delta Table serves as a persistent store for Ingestion history and supports data quality checks and monitoring using Azure Data Explorer. The Databricks Delta Lake engine natively integrates with Azure Data Lake Storage Gen2. By selecting or placing the Configuration Control Data in the Data Lake during the Data Ingestion process, it uses Delta for persistent Storage of Data Ingestion and Data Processing logs.

6.2. Silver Layer: Cleaned, Conformed, and feature-ready Data

All relevant combinations of features are generated and stored in a central feature store, which acts as a single source of truth for training and evaluating machine learning models. Features in the feature store can be joined with the ground truth data present in the Bronze/Silver layers to properly train Models. These sections describe how the feature store is built and how it enables feature engineering for enterprise MLOps use cases.

The silver layer of the architecture prepares conformed business entity data that is in-line with the processes across the multiple business units. Consistency checks to ensure that the data available in the silver layer across Delta tables are said to be passing based on defined rules. Silver data can also be used as a baseline dataset in cases, when the business requires a known outlier-free data for model training and assessment. Along with conformed data, all relevant combinations of features that are required for model training and validation should also be made available in the silver layer in order to enable MLOps within the architecture. The feature set created in the silver layer acts as a single source of truth for feature engineering. The assets created within this layer address a majority of the industry MLOps use-cases covered for the solution, forming the core of the predictive systems.

MLOps require proper collaboration, validation, and governance in the model training stage. These requirements necessitate the use of an ML framework that enables continuous training of ML models. Various aspects of MLOPs are as follows.

– Model Training and Validation: Model training involves both feature engineering and artifact validation. Feature engineering—a set of steps to create relevant features—is usually a

collaboration among teams and departments. Feature Engineering enables the Data teams and ML developers to define and create the required features that are required for ML model training and validation.

Equation 2. Silver to Gold business-serving data

Let f be the fraction of Silver data that is feature-ready or business-usable.

Start from Silver volume:

$$D_S = qcD_B$$

Then Gold volume is:

$$D_G = fD_S$$

Substitute D_S:

$D_G = f(qcD_B)$ $\boxed{D_G = fqcD_B}$

So Gold volume depends on raw data volume, quality pass rate, conformance success, and business usability.

7. Data Ingestion and Lakehouse Integration on Azure

Data ecosystem integration at the Azure cloud-init-based layer, specifically to the Bronze layer, can be achieved in various ways, with the simplest method being the native support by some data sources for writing data to ADLS Gen2 using the OAuth 2.0 protocol. Another option is to use the native methods provided by various Azure data services, such as Azure Data Factory or Azure Stream Analytics. Azure Data Factory enables orchestrating business processes and creating pipelines that can define data flows between different storage locations. These data flows facilitate the creation of datasets that can be processed, transformed, and transferred from one location to another, while Azure Stream Analytics can be used for ingesting real-time data in a nearly-similar way. The Eucalyptus Bank case study created a streaming source of transactions directly to the Bronze layer using Azure Stream Analytics.

Nevertheless, the most common solution that provides enormous flexibility for raw data management, in addition to the Azure Application service code for pushing changes through an API call, is using the Databricks Lakehouse Platform. The Lakehouse Platform provides a managed and highly available Databricks Runtime, the Apache Spark engine, and DBFS, a Hadoop-compatible blob store that enables easy reading and writing of files in multiple formats. Using its Delta Lake compatibility, it can read and write by executing DataFrame operations or directly by selecting the correct storage path for input/output operations. In this scenario, a notebook with the orchestrator pipeline can be triggered by Azure Data Factory to run in Databricks Job along with a defined cluster that is autoscoped depending on the quote received. It allows using the native Databricks synchronization mechanism for executing notebooks that run in Python with Scala if required by the ongoing commands.

7.1. Azure Data Lake Storage Gen2 and Delta Lake Compatibility

Azure Data Lake Storage Gen2 provides integral storage for the reference architecture. Delta Lake, on which the reference architecture relies, is an open-source storage-layer technology from Databricks that brings reliability and performance benefits to cloud object storage as well as data lakes. Delta Lake is also a natively supported format in many of the core Azure services, including Azure Data Factory, Azure Synapse Analytics, Azure Data Engineering, and Power BI. When the Databricks Lakehouse platform is used, Delta Lake is fully embedded in the solution.

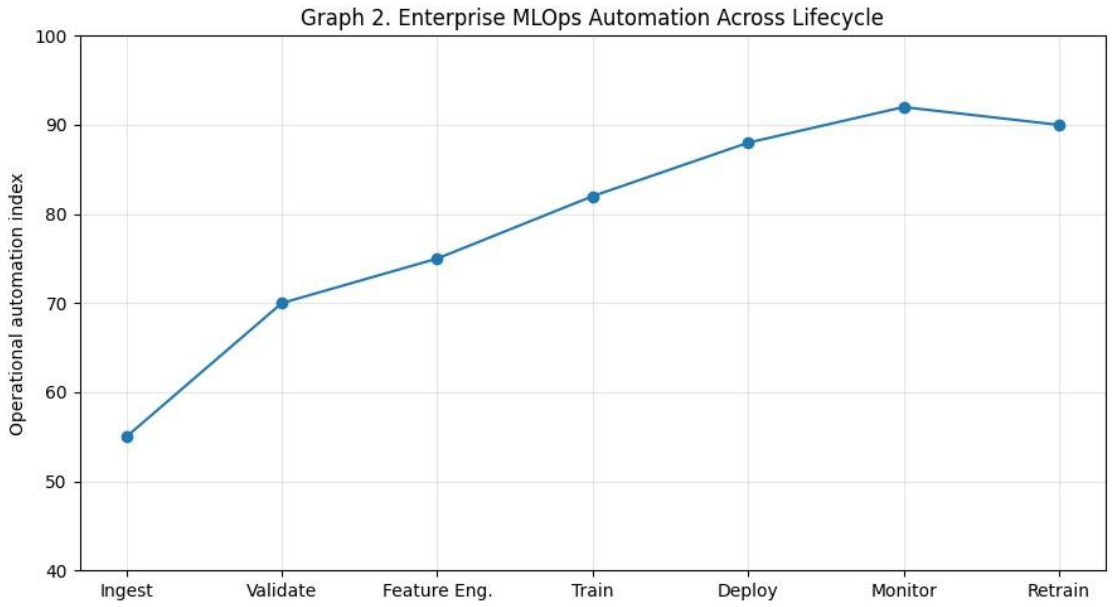
7.2. Databricks Lakehouse Platform for Processing

With core Data Governance, Data Quality, and MLOps practices established, focus can shift to the strategic layers of the Medallion Architecture. The Bronze layer is responsible for raw data ingestion and management; at first glance, this may seem less complex than the others. However, a properly managed Bronze layer with foundational MLOps practices enables effective scale-out for both the Silver and Gold layers. The Silver layer deals with data cleaning and conformance, transforming raw data into consistent entities ready for analysis; a stable Gold layer provides data science-ready features.

The Silver layer also serves as the natural integration point into the Azure Lakehouse and the Azure ecosystem more broadly, as larger-scale ETL and ELT processes can be developed here. The processing and pipeline components are Azure Data Factory and Azure Data Bricks.

P-ISSN: 3050-9734
E-ISSN: 3050-9742
EUROPEAN ADVANCED JOURNAL FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
VOLUME: 02 ISSUE: 02
RECEIVED: APRIL 25 REVISED: MAY 14 ACCEPTED: MAY 28 PUBLISHED: JUNE 17

The Databricks Lakehouse Platform provides a unified approach to managing data, analytical data warehousing, and data science. While Delta Lake storage is exposed through Azure Data Lake Storage Gen2, Databricks provides the IDE experience for development and testing of pipelines, data science applications, and ML model training.



8. MLOps Practices within the Medallion Architecture

The architecture embeds key components and practices for managing Machine Learning Model Development, Deployment, and Operations (MLOps). The process encompasses two major activities: operate Training, Validation, and Compliance of Models, and continuous Integration and Deployment (CI/CD) of Models, including Packaging, Versioning, Testing, Validation, and Deployment into production or pre-production environments. Each activity involves several participants implementing the Azure Databricks, Azure DevOps, and Azure Monitor services in different combinations.

The Model Training, Validation, and Compliance process aims to develop ML models that comply with company standards for accuracy, bias detection, and governance before being promoted into pre-production or production environments. It requires Data Engineers, Data

Scientists, and MLOps Engineers to integrate their competencies applying MLOps best practices through the Databricks MLOps framework. Three parts of the framework are particularly relevant: ML-Flow for tracking experiments; Good – Machine Learning Model Health Check, a library for automating Common Data-driven Decision Support Testing, Validation, and Reporting; and DataBricks for deploying CI/CD pipelines when MLOps are in production. A detailed description of the integration and implementation of these efforts is beyond the scope of this document but can be found in related literature.

Equation 3. Data quality pass rate

Let:

- N_{total} = total records tested
- N_{pass} = records passing tests
- N_{fail} = records failing tests

By definition,

$$N_{total} = N_{pass} + N_{fail}$$

The pass fraction is:

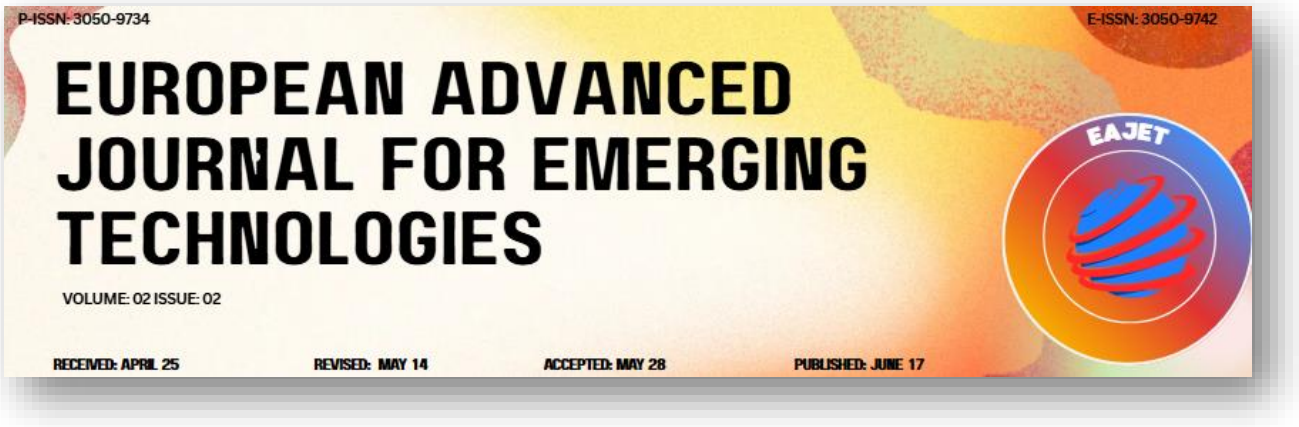
$$q = \frac{N_{pass}}{N_{total}}$$

Hence:

$$\boxed{q = \frac{N_{pass}}{N_{pass} + N_{fail}}}$$

Similarly, the failure rate is:

$$1 - q = \frac{N_{fail}}{N_{total}}$$



This equation directly supports Bronze/Silver filtering.

8.1. Model Training, Validation, and Compliance

Within the reference architecture, MLOps practices address different model-related entities and processes, enabling organizations to integrate Machine Learning and AI capabilities more natively into their artefacts. Models are built from features prepared in the Silver layer or from raw data suitably integrated for training. The underlying concerns regarding data compliance, data provenance, and supporting metadata, can form the basis of model governance workflows. Appropriate training data can be produced or prescribed, and lineage-driving strategies can be leveraged to connect models back to the data that trained them.

Current best practices for artificial intelligence models generally endorse a broader set of principles. Performance afloat as a model is used in production is considered essential, with monitoring of inference quality triggered into the downstream data observability workflows. Model dashboards enable rapid alerting to shifts in model performance, while also offering an overview of other aspects of an AI product from data and training through to deployment and inference. Once monitored, re-training or re-tuning may be necessary to deliver solutions that remain "fit-for-purpose" as time passes.

Symbol	Meaning
D_B	Bronze-layer raw data volume
D_S	Silver-layer conformed data volume
D_G	Gold-layer business-serving data volume
q	Fraction of records passing quality checks
c	Conformance / standardization success factor
f	Fraction of conformed data usable as features
λ	Data arrival rate
μ	Processing service rate
W	Number of workers
T	Processing time

Symbol	Meaning
C	Cost
r	Cost per worker per unit time
A	Model accuracy
$A_{\min}$	Minimum accepted production accuracy
d_m	Model drift
d_d	Data drift
M	Metadata completeness ratio

8.2. Continuous Integration and Deployment of Models

Training and validating MLOps-ready data-driven models is just part of the story. These models must also be deployed into production systems in a controlled manner to ensure that they are ready for the demands of a production environment and can be monitored for success. A CI/CD pipeline enables the automatic deployment of models that have successfully passed the training-validation phase into production. The output of this pipelines is the model itself together with the evidence from testing and validation. Triggered to execute when a successful commit is pushed onto specific target branches of the model's repository, this pipeline orchestrates model deployment.

A validation job ensures that all of the pertinent testing conditions are met before the model is accepted into the production environment. Only when testing conditions are validated can the CI/CD pipeline transmit the model, along with all requisite files and evidence, into the model registry for post-training and pre-production execution. A monitoring job regularly checks that all production conditions are still being met and notifies the appropriate personnel if quality drops below acceptable levels. Seven conditions are specifically monitored: model drift, data drift, testing coverage, logging, prediction accuracy, and batch size.

9. Data Governance, Quality, and Compliance

Governance at Scale Is a Challenge

P-ISSN: 3050-9734
E-ISSN: 3050-9742
EUROPEAN ADVANCED JOURNAL FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
VOLUME: 02 ISSUE: 02
RECEIVED: APRIL 25
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ACCEPTED: MAY 28
PUBLISHED: JUNE 17

The availability of a medallion architecture at scale creates a huge surface for consumer access. Furthermore, the consumer surface becomes increasingly heterogeneous with the inclusion of modeling teams and consumers focused on regulatory oversight, such as data privacy, financial control, and data protection. This essentially mandates a shift left of governance practices into the medallion framework. Only a consolidated approach across capable cross-functional teams can realistically support effective oversight within a cost-effective governance model.

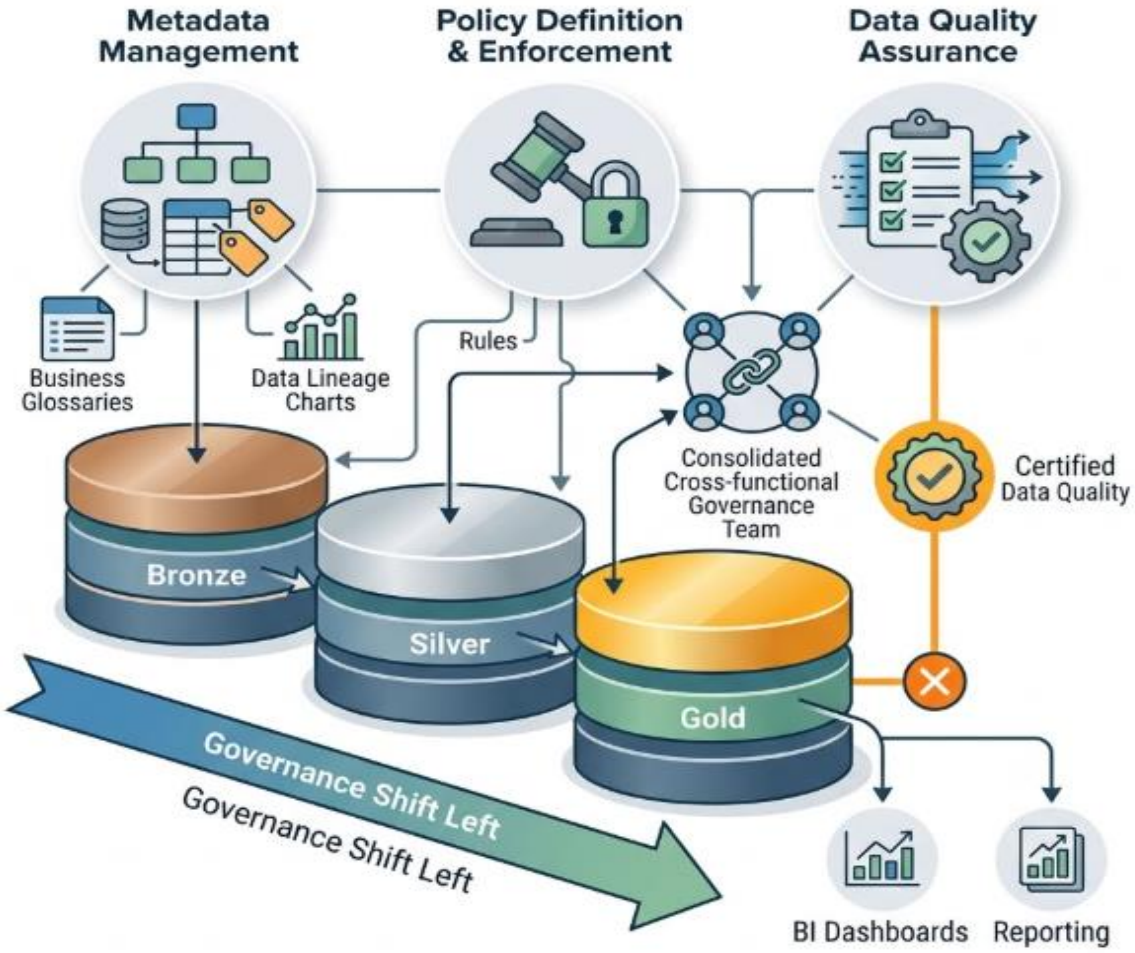

Fig 3: Unified Governance Frameworks for Scalable Medallion Architectures: A 'Shift Left' Approach to Data Quality and Metadata Management

The previous definitions of the governance pillar highlight the core aspects that need to be monitored and governed: metadata, policy definition and enforcement, information security, data protection, and data quality assurance. The next two sections detail a cohesive framework that meets all these requirements, concentrating on metadata management and data quality.

Key Elements of the Governance Framework

Metadata requires correct definition and management to support the operationalization of a scalable medallion architecture. Metadata typically include business-related content, high-level definitions about data processed (business glossaries), consumption patterns, definition of retention periods, frequency of data availability, sections related to the business lineage, and links to models trained for the datasets. For a correctly implemented data quality framing, no BI dashboards or reports should be consumed unless there is a certified data quality report, which is usually managed as part of the business metadata.

9.1. Metadata Management and Lineage

Rich metadata drives effective data governance, quality control, and compliance. Integrating Azure Data Catalog with Data Factory creates a central catalog repository for describing the data assets in the lakehouse. Automated data lineage tracking links data flow through the lakehouse layers, providing a timeline for data transformations. Azure Synapse Analytics integrates with Data Factory to monitor data assets and flows.

Data sharing is a vital element of any enterprise data strategy. Services such as BizTalk, Azure API Management, Azure Functions, and Azure Logic Apps facilitate efficient and secure distribution of ingested data. Multiple data-sharing offerings based on industry standards and best practices are available to support diverse usage scenarios.

Applying the CMMI for Data Management v2.0 framework enables organizations to conduct a capability maturity assessment and define a road map for managing their data assets. Building core governance, quality, and compliance processes — with a focus on enhancing data classification, definitions, and inventory — establishes a solid foundation. Incorporating advanced metadata-driven rules and checks into the data-pipeline flows determines the level of data quality.

9.2. Data Quality Framework and Testing

Compliance with data governance policies necessitates the adoption of an appropriate data quality framework. To assist in testing data quality, the SQLAlchemy library provides the basis for building reversible tests integrated into data pipelines via an add-in. This ultimate level of data quality procedure enables all the data quality tests defined beforehand to be checked within a CI/CD pipeline continuously. Any failure is then notified via an alerting system to allow for the fault to be repaired before damaging model performance.

Within a business case utilizing the data pipeline, new tests hold a specific documentation configuration in the test title. These tests validate test quality on either a predefined period or even a smaller scenario based on a sample of the dataset. When passing, all the objects created by these tests on the test database are deleted, allowing for a perfectly clean environment. The machine learning models consume the data after the test procedure, and SQL stored procedures trigger downstream processes within the architecture to update the SQL Server database used at the beginning of the implementation.

Equation 4. Metadata completeness ratio

Let:

- $m_{required}$ = total required metadata fields
- m_{filled} = number actually populated

Then metadata completeness is:

$$M = \frac{m_{filled}}{m_{required}}$$

So:

$$\boxed{M = \frac{m_{filled}}{m_{required}}}$$

If expressed as a percentage:

P-ISSN: 3050-9734
E-ISSN: 3050-9742
EUROPEAN ADVANCED JOURNAL FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
VOLUME: 02 ISSUE: 02
RECEIVED: APRIL 25
REVISED: MAY 14
ACCEPTED: MAY 28
PUBLISHED: JUNE 17

$$M_{\%} = 100 \times \frac{m_{filled}}{m_{required}}$$

10. Scalability, Performance, and Cost Optimization

Scalability, performance, and cost optimization have become fundamental attributes of enterprise systems and solutions. Performance tuning of data pipelines and processes can be done through careful design and implementation in each layer of the Medallion Architecture. Performance testing should be an integral part of operationalizing the architecture to identify and remediate performance bottlenecks. Resource consumption can be optimized and controlled both at the data processing and analysis level through elasticity, autoscaling, and resource isolation.

Data processing and analysis jobs can be tuned within the Medallion Architecture. The Azure Databricks Lakehouse platform provides features and capabilities for optimizing performance across the various Azure data services. Advanced optimizing capabilities like materialized views, caching, and Z-ordering can select caching and data-skew optimization while controlling data transfer costs. Data science initiatives and machine learning pipelines must also leverage these capabilities and be tested to remove performance bottlenecks.

10.1. Performance Tuning Across Layers

Performance tuning across layers enables efficient utilization of storage and compute resources. It considers data structure; caching; files, directories, and partition size; and data sampling. Storage footprint is minimized in the bronze layer by retaining only the latest, known-bad records from integrated source tables. Silver-layer records added for semantic enrichment are kept in-memory as views to obviate the metamorphic explosion typical of dimensional models. Ingestion jobs use built-in Delta Lake metadata summarization when loading incremental or partitioned data.

Standard Delta Lake optimization strategies are applied to the silver and gold layers: coalescing files to minimize request payload overhead while maintaining reasonable parallelism; caching frequently accessed tables for performance-critical consumers, e.g., feature-scoring models, Active Directory, and configuration data; and judiciously resizing partitions based on DML queries across registers, feature managers, model training, and feature stores. The Azure platform allows dynamic partition-based sample sizes. Sensitivity testing quantifies the cost–

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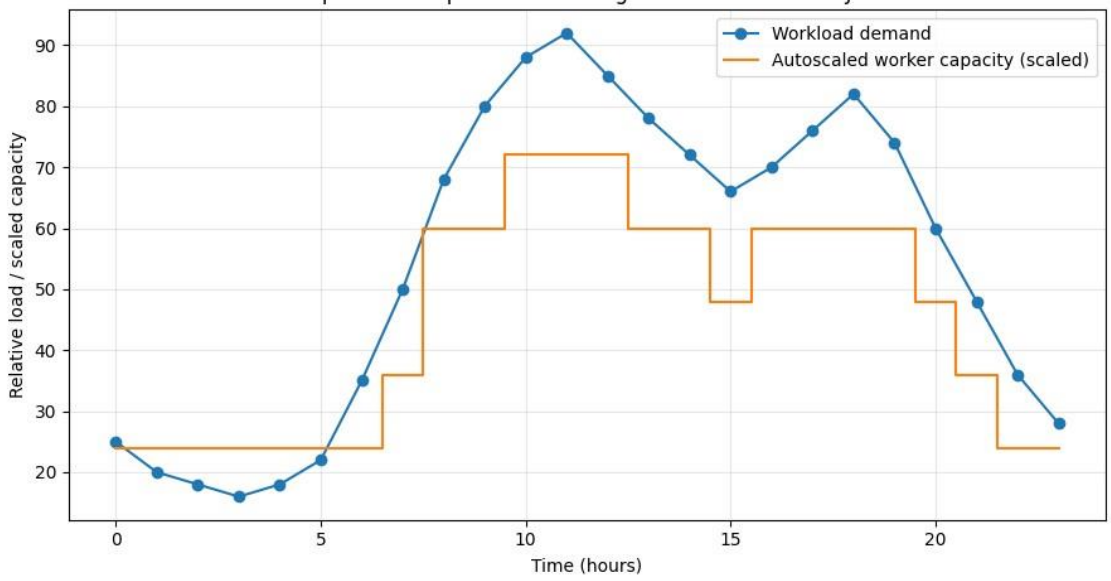
benefit trade-off of sampling versus full detail for features that are not behaviorally stable across clients, cohorts, and time.

Graph 3. Conceptual Autoscaling in Azure Databricks Jobs



10.2. Elasticity, Autoscaling, and Resource Isolation

Cloud computing enables easy provisioning of computing resources and infinite scalability, provided that cost control is considered. For workloads that fluctuate considerably, such as big data processing, it is crucial to provision infrastructure intelligently by adopting a pay-per-use model. Azure and Databricks provide integrated features to ensure elasticity, autoscaling, and resource isolation.

In the Medallion Reference Architecture, the Bronze Layer ingests multiple sources concurrently and processes high volumes of data. In the Silver Layer, non-compliant and dirty data is cleaned before being exported to third-party platforms. Elasticity must be ensured to monitor the arrival of data in these layers and increase the capacity of jobs automatically. Databricks Jobs have built-in autoscaling capabilities, which improve resource utilization and save costs by increasing and decreasing the number of workers according to the workload. The only requirement is to create the cluster with autoscaling enabled and specify the minimum and

maximum number of workers. Jobs must also be configured with a Timeout (Duration) setting that suits the workload and a Low Priority option, so they can use spare capacity in the worker pool.

11. Operationalization and DevOps for Data and Models

Data and machine learning model life cycles must be integrated into a smooth operationalization experience, which requires the definition of processes spanning data and model use. Automated continuous integration and continuous deployment (CI/CD) pipelines must be implemented for datasets and Al/ML models following DevOps best practices. CI/CD pipelines for datasets ensure the readiness of clean, conformed, and feature-ready datasets with high quality, enabling models to consume them right away for training, testing, inference, and backtesting. CI/CD pipelines for models establish automated testing, validation, and deployment processes to ensure that they are integrated into systems consuming them as soon as they comply with requirements.

Moreover, monitoring and alerting solutions must be set up to detect problems with the data or data-intensive systems as soon as they happen. Alert backlogs with known issues must be prioritized and resolved by engineers responsible for the affected components together with data engineers, data scientists, DevOps engineers, and/or IT infrastructure and support teams, as needed. Together with the monitoring and alerting framework, a practice for incident response and post-mortem analysis of incidents must be defined to ensure that the team learns from past failures and improves its ability to avoid their repetition.

11.1. CI/CD Pipelines for Data and Models

Ingesting and integrating data in a lakehouse with a Bronze layer is traditionally considered enough to reap the advantages of Delta Lake and the Databricks Lakehouse Platform. Yet, for many use cases delivering enterprise-level Data Intelligence, the data should be cleansed, enriched, tested, and conformed within a Silver layer that goes beyond just laying the groundwork for Model training and Business Intelligence. The Architect of a scalable Enterprise-grade Medallion Architecture not only incorporates MLOps practices for the delivery of Machine Learning and AI candidates within the Silver layer but advances the enterprise solution by operationalizing the data in the lakehouse and the ML models in Production for the business.

For the operationalization of Data and Models, a set of CI/CD pipelines must be designed according to the requirements and constraints of the enterprise Delivery and Release Management process. These pipelines are responsible for provisioning, deploying, monitoring, alerting, and responding to incidents in the Data and Models delivered within the Data Intelligence Azure and Databricks Architecture Reference Implementation. The design of the Data pipelines that continuously integrate the new and modified data into the Silver layer is a key aspect of operationalization.

Equation 5. Processing throughput and runtime

Let:

- D = amount of data to process
- μ = rate processed by one worker
- W = number of workers

Then total processing rate is:

$$\text{Total rate} = W\mu$$

Runtime equals work divided by rate:

$$T = \frac{D}{W\mu}$$

Hence:

$$\boxed{T = \frac{D}{W\mu}}$$

This shows why increasing workers reduces processing time.

Rearrangement for worker sizing

If you want runtime not to exceed a target T_{max}, then:

$$T \leq T_{max}$$

Substitute:

$$\frac{D}{W\mu} \leq T_{max}$$

Multiply both sides by $W\mu$:

$$D \leq T_{max} W\mu$$

Solve for W:

$$W \geq \frac{D}{\mu T_{max}} \quad \boxed{W \geq \frac{D}{\mu T_{max}}}$$

11.2. Monitoring, Alerting, and Incident Response

Continuous Insight and Control are a Priority for Azure Medallion Workflows, Leveraging Native Azure Monitor Capabilities

Every enterprise-grade component deployed on Azure has full First-Class Service Integration with Azure Monitor, natively exposing alerts and metrics for all Azure Services, allowing custom alerts, newsletters, dashboards, and even remediation to be configured per layer/component. Monitoring and alerting configuration should cover the “good” and “bad”: expected consumption patterns, loading times, costs, and service resources should be measured and alert signals defined that could act out of the norm. Automated processes could trigger specific automations upon the feedback of Azure Monitor.

Even with a strong monitoring capability, Azure Medallion Architecture ensures alerts could also be posted to an external channel (such as MS Teams, Slack, or Webex) to ensure maximum traceability and that incidents are being routed to the correct people. For all components, a general slowness alert should be defined, ensuring every process consuming a resource and taking too long (in loading, processing, or other) could be sent. Every pipeline process could ship a message to the notification channel when finished, indicating success/failure, allowing for a lightweight/low operational cost notification setup.

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12. Case Study: Enterprise Deployment Scenarios

Enterprise deployments of the reference architecture encompass a wide variety of use cases spanning multiple industries. A data intelligence platform with the proposed architecture provides a foundation capable of addressing industry-agnostic requirements with dedicated, reusable components. The resulting infrastructure can accommodate the specific needs of different sectors, enabling organisations to build and enforce best practices and recognised compliance frameworks, such as data segregation and governance, throughout the enterprise while preserving the agility of a decentralised setup.

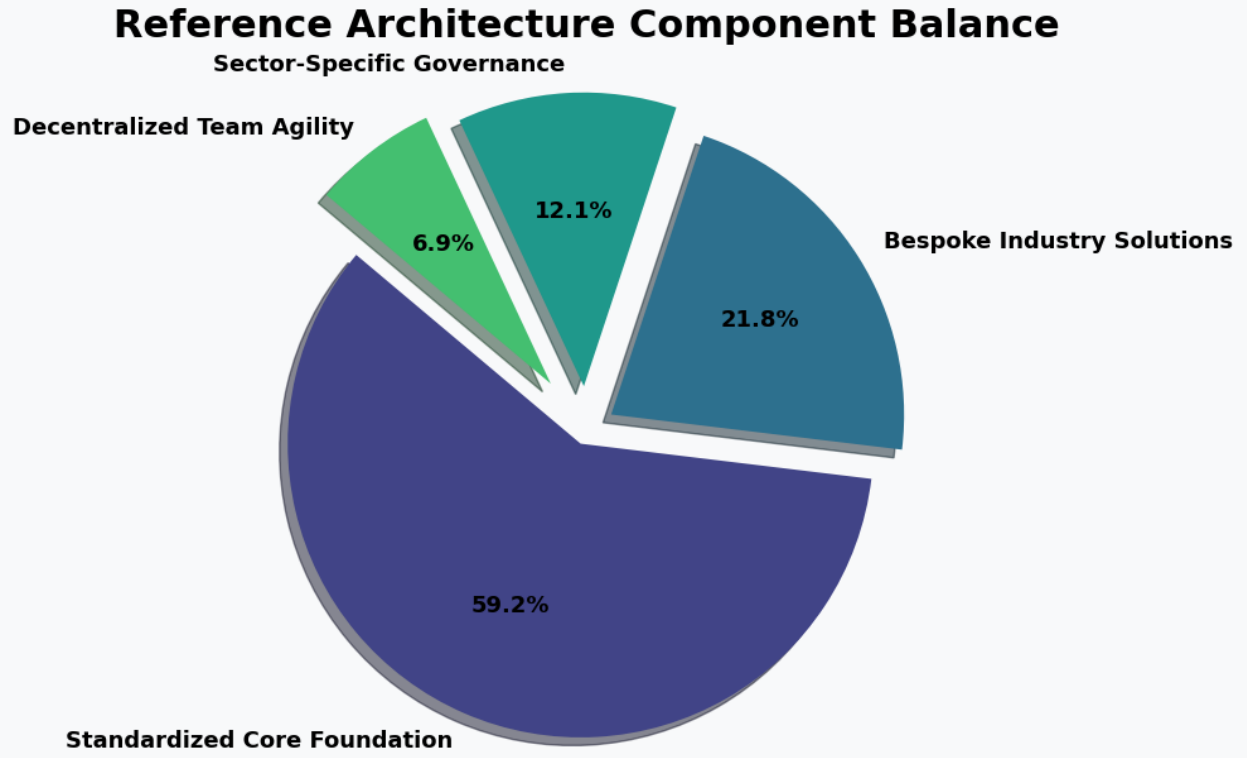

Fig 4: Reference Architecture Component Balance

Although the Geneva-based office of the deployer focuses primarily on investments within the luxury sector, it is also engaged in multiple projects across retail, consumer goods, services, technology and telecommunications. Topics currently being investigated relate to

exciting areas including the metaverse, the convergence of physical and digital worlds, new material technologies, sustainability in food production and energy distribution, self-sovereign identity, next-generation marketing and the evolution of customer experience. Standardised and reusable components of the data intelligence platform support both heterogeneous and homogenous groups of enterprises with often varying levels of data maturity. Succinct design and development of bespoke solutions addressing the specific requirements of a new topic opens up opportunities for dedicated teams within the group.

12.1. Industry-Agnostic Use Cases

A preliminary implementation of the MLOps-ready Medallion Architecture can support a growing portfolio of industry-agnostic enterprise use cases. Cognitive Services simplify adaptation to diverse business domains for pipeline-ready images, text, speech, and language. The ability to train, validate, and orchestrate models in a production-ready manner supports compliance, reliability, and continuous quality improvement.

The assignment of image classification models to the reference architecture's DataOps pipeline enables operationalization, Scheduled inference-scoring requests for multiple trained, validated models help maintain focus on continual model quality and user-experience monitoring. Enriched metadata empowers Data Quality frameworks, metadata-based dashboards, and System Support for users adopting Active Directory and Azure security policies.

12.2. Domain-Specific Extensions and Best Practices

Medallion architectures are inherently versatile and support various operational needs often seen in enterprise use cases that require data governance capabilities. A common set of requirements is described for the azure-based solution in conjunction with Databricks, but different domains usually have additional constraints and opportunities that can affect the overall design. Based on such domain–specific patterns, best practices and recommended extensions have been described in literature covering financial services, public sector, and healthcare. The examples below are only a small selection from various sources, and they include just a few noteworthy objectives of suboptimal implementations.

In financial services organisations, data remain at rest for a very short period, with the full ETL process normally taking only few minutes so that analytics can be performed in almost real-time and alerts triggered only when needed. Medallion patterns can be attractive for such

industry players for the complete end-to-end monitoring pipelines across all domains of the enterprise. Use of the Medallion architecture as an enterprise model for CI/CD DevOps pipelines optimised for Data & Machine Learning Software Engineering can provide the means to distribute and deploy assets to multiple, heterogeneous environments: Development, Test Quality Assurance, Production, Pre-production in canary mode but also Pre-production for User Acceptance Testing.

AI can also be used to help analysts in the Public Sector by providing assistants that facilitate the analysis of large volumes of data. Organised under such a Medallion Data & AI Architecture the correct set of conditions and environments shall be addressed for both the data side and the AI development side. Privacy issues in this sector are a major concern; both data security and data sovereignty need to be ensured. The use of synthetic data with similar characteristics as real data can contribute to protect against such dangers. Besides data provenance, traceability and lineage control are usually also high on the list of priorities for the data custodians responsible for the production and governance. In the Healthcare industry, similar processes, principles and CI/CD patterns hold true, notwithstanding the specific regulatory considerations that need to be strictly followed.

13. Results

Multiple enterprise scenarios from various industries can benefit from the proposed architecture, with a few examples being presented. A generic packaging company uses the reference architecture combined with optical character recognition, natural language processing, and computer vision models for product intelligence and customer insights from digital channels. Models refresh daily and are hosted within the dedicated MLOps structure. A success story from the consumer services area involves automatic churn detection through customer survey evaluation and the generation of customized offers for churn avoidance. A bank took advantage of preserving models and related data in the featured data intelligence backbone, ensuring continuous compliance over time through a combination of retraining and revalidation steps together with CI/CD pipelines. Another use case in the vehicle rental market relied on continuous data ingestion and enrichment processes to enable a model that predicts demand across locations. It leveraged a central data hub with all the background required for explainable AI and confidence in the generated output.

14. Conclusions

A medallion architecture shapes the data flow from ingestion to ML model serving. In this design, the use of the Azure Data Lake Storage Gen2 storage technology plays a central role in building a Lakehouse technology that supports the requested features. Through the Databricks platform, native integration with Delta Lake, support for SPARK processing, and a complete framework for the CI/CD operationalization of the final ML models are available.

The design principles for the architecture guarantee both scalability and performance. They also allow for an effective cost-saving strategy thanks to the mechanism of resource isolation and elasticity through autoscaling. Datablocks provides a series of tools to guarantee a complete data governance process: metadata management, lineage, quality checks, alerts, and incident response pipelines.

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