Deep Science Publishing, 2026
https://doi.org/10.70593/978-93-7185-978-3_3

Chapter 3: Data Integration and Interoperability Frameworks

3.1. Introduction

Despite the growing sophistication of data integration technologies, the resulting integrated data remains isolated from other datasets, making it useful only for specialized applications. Increasing use of web and cloud services to support business processes for the collection and sharing of commercial data comes from the need to link up services from multiple vendors. Attempting to solve the problem of data integration in such environments in a simple and correct way results in a need for a SASS situation. The application of such principles would allow for real-time integration but introduce some challenges: data availability, consistency and provenance of the data being used. Similarly, a mapping of a typical cloud integration pattern—taking data from one or more clouds, transforming and augmenting it, and storing the result in another cloud—indicates that it would involve all the recently exposed challenges.

A wide variety of definitions for interoperability in information systems exist: a systematic classification permits the identification of four key aspects—policy, process, semantic, and syntactic. Regulation, context and schema information across the boundaries being crossed; the actual execution of business processes involving role and transaction agreement; the use of a common ontology to exchange information; and the actual data formats let the data move and driving an automated execution over the boundary. A novel business interoperability framework that endeavors to address the increasing challenges of information systems with respect to interoperability is gathered by the same aspects and principles.

3.2. Foundations of Data Integration

The foundation of data integration involves three aspects of the data to be integrated, namely the data sources, data granularity, and the structure of the data (schema) contained in the sources. In any integration scenario, it is necessary to identify the data sources early, because custodians of the data sources must understand the meaning and purpose of the integration, and the integration cannot proceed unless Expressive interfaces have been implemented for these sources. For example, unless a change is anticipated, it is usually prudent and sufficient to sample the sources only once, during the design stage of the integration application.

Any data integration effort must ultimately answer the question of how the data from different sources will be presented to the users. Data cleaning and data warehouse architectures resolve this question by storing the integrated data in a separate data store. Data ontology addresses this question by establishing an ontology that describes the semantics of the integrated data. The primary goal of the ontology is to provide a platform-independent description of the integrated data. This description can facilitate semantic interoperability of the consumer services with the data providers. Event processing correctly stress the need for alignment of the data provided by the sources at the time the event is consumed, but the issue is not limited to events. Any integration system combining data from heterogeneous sources, for example, Web 3.0, must ensure alignment of the data before it is presented to the consumers.

3.2.1. Data Sources and Granularity

Data integration involves the extraction and integration of data from multiple heterogeneous sources followed by analysis using appropriate data science methods. Several concepts—such as data source, data granularity, schema, sample, extraction, transformation, loading, and, of course, integration—are fundamental to data integration systems. Identification of the sources from which data will be extracted along with the data granularity level is the first step in the data integration process. The sources can be textual, tabular, or relational in nature and can be heterogeneous in nature. Data are collected at three different levels of granularity: item level, record level, and data set level. Consider the integration of sales data from three different companies providing similar products. The sales data may be represented as tabular data sets being published by the three different companies, with columns containing na?ve data.

Various strategies and techniques are used for extracting, transforming, and loading data from multiple heterogeneous sources. The extraction, transformation, and loading (ETL) concepts are used frequently for integrating data coming from heterogeneous structured and semi-structured data sources storing data in flat files or databases. Data features may differ across sources. Standard data warehouses frequently maintain, validate, and present a single version of the integrated data. The biggest challenges in ETL processes are data cleaning, data fusion, and data consistency.

3.2.2. Semantic and Syntactic Interoperability

The notion of semantic interoperability relates to the shared understanding of the information exchanged by two (or more) systems. Sharing the same meaning—in other words, the same semantics—of exchanged data between systems makes it possible to process the information immediately without requiring additional data transformations, mappings, or user interaction. As a consequence, semantic interoperability is a prerequisite for achieving the goal of true automation of the interaction between software systems. In the absence of semantic interoperability, additional operations may be required to convert data into an acceptable format.

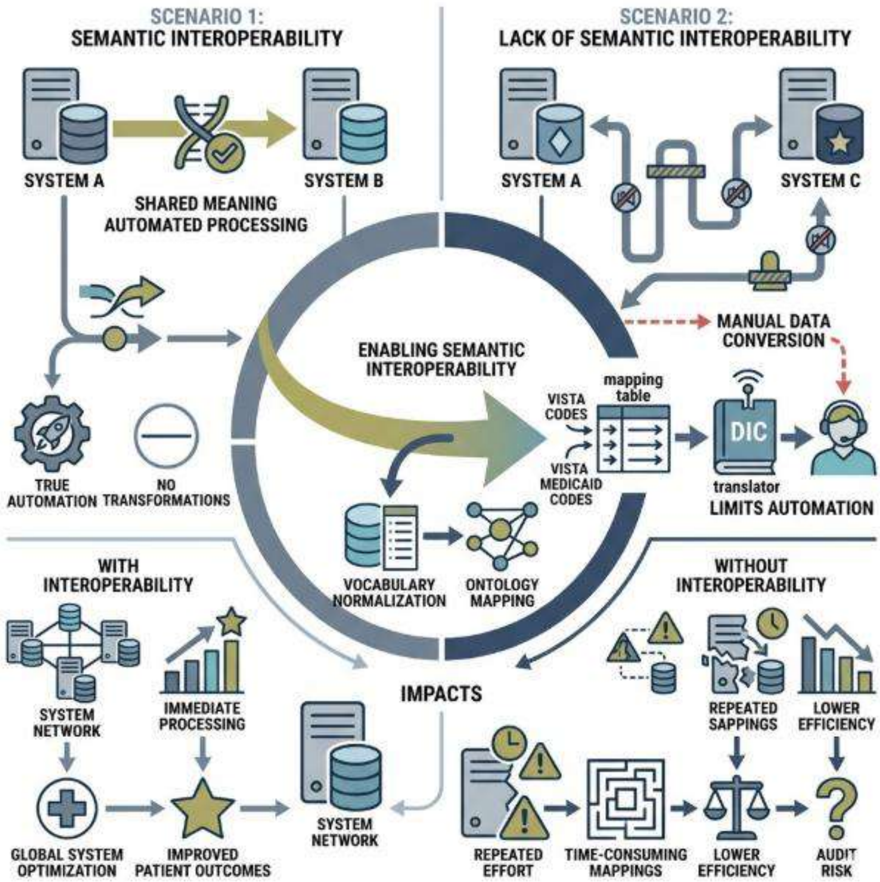

Fig 3.1: A Framework for True Semantic Interoperability and Automated Data Exchange in Complex Systems

In most cases, lack of semantic interoperability does not prevent the data exchange from taking place, but it limits levels of process automation. Vista, with its diagnosis codes based on a nomenclature adopted by the Department of Veterans Affairs (as opposed to the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision), can send clinical data to

Medicaid without any problem. However, retrieving patient data from Medicaid into Vista requires assistance from the healthcare professional or a translator that can convert codes of two different vocabularies into a common language. The process of enabling semantic interoperability involves establishing a mapping or a normalization between vocabularies, which is not trivial and very time-consuming. Ontologies can also be used to achieve semantic interoperability.

3.3. Interoperability Frameworks and Architectural Models

Enterprise Service Bus and Middleware Architectures

An Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) is an intermediary software layer that serves as a centralized platform for communication among disparate applications within a single enterprise. It provides highly adaptable interfaces for both service requesters (clients) and providers, along with advanced support for service orchestration, routing, transformation, and monitoring. An ESB also facilitates service governance, a set of policies for managing the lifecycle, availability, and security of shared services. Enterprise Service Bus and Middleware Architectures surrounding a middleware-based integration framework, it is an architectural and integration model for new applications. An ESB is middleware and provides integration capabilities for new applications. An ESB can interact with any other applications that expose an integration interface irrespective of the application software or hardware platform used.

While promoting loose coupling, increased transparency, and continuous discovery, the ESB approach can increase the complexity of the solution and introduce a single point of failure if all dependencies are not handled carefully. Scalability relies on the ESB performing its functions in a distributed manner across multiple instances. Reliability can be enhanced through clustering, but this can incur additional setup and operational costs. As with any middleware-based solution, deployment requires careful consideration of the tradeoffs involved.

3.3.1. Enterprise Service Bus and Middleware Architectures

Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) and middleware architectures are widely used approaches to facilitate system integration and interoperability in service-oriented architectures. Such middleware layers play a pivotal role in service orchestration and act as central routing and transformation points for messages exchanged among service consumers and providers. In addition, they govern the interactions among the services and, consequently, the data flow within both the enterprise and its external ecosystem. Having the potential to apply also in cloud or hybrid environments, these architectures fulfil non-functional requirements such as scalability and reliability.

Although the original conception of an ESB stresses the need for a fully-fledged middleware for a SOA implementation, the latter can, in fact, rely on a simpler middleware layer fulfilling four crucial steps in the service interactions: routing, orchestration, transformation, and governance. The routing functionality is responsible for relaying the messages exchanged between service consumers and providers while orchestrating multiple services, although controlled by other nodes. In this perspective, the middleware can be viewed as a decoupling solution that enables dynamic and on-the-fly composition of service chains without any knowledge on the routes among the services on the consumers' side and within the services themselves. The direction of the routing logic, however, is not necessarily from the consumer to the provider: the manager of a collecting service consuming data from a stream of publish/subscribe services can also apply orchestration logic.

3.3.2. Federated and Distributed Data Architectures

Two alternative data architectures can be considered: federated and distributed. A concept often referred to as data federation is facilitated in federated architectures. In this case, data sources are left independent and physically separate, but the structure is designed to provide a single, unified view of the data. To achieve this, a middleware service takes care of the necessary translation and coordinates execution over multiple sources, often in a parallel fashion. As in any federated system, there are some issues to take into account, such as the definition of the federated schema and the mapping of the local schemas onto the federated schema structure. Estimating the cost for executing a federated query is also important for determining the best execution plan by minimizing the total response time. In data virtualization, the answers to user queries are built dynamically, encompassing the sources identified as relevant via on-the-fly data profiling, regardless of data type.

Distributed data architectures are often adopted in cloud settings. Unlike a federated system, in this case the data is duplicated and accessible from more than one location. The duplicated data copies can be locally stored in different sites or replicated in separate locations, possibly in heterogeneous data formats. Achieving data consistency and freshness is one of the major challenges, as high update frequencies imply significant overhead in keeping all replicas synchronized. The data consistency requirement can be relaxed without strongly compromising data usability; it is then possible to apply consistency models such as eventual consistency in the system design. In replicated scenarios where latency is a primary concern, read operations can be routed to the nearest replica.

3.4. Standards, Protocols, and Reference Architectures

Data integration, interoperability, and the associated architectural models can benefit from standardization and the definition of reference architecture. Reference architecture minimizes the level of detail, defining the main functional components and services shared among solutions. Clearly defined reference architecture for these aspects can provide a baseline concept. All sectors launch solutions inspired by these concepts.

Standardizations are applicable and adopted at many levels. Some standards provide ontologies or reference models for narrow domains; others fulfill generic requirements managed in catalogues. A catalogue of standardization and ontologies covering the major areas is a good starting point. The coverage may be complemented with new standards when required.

To cover message exchange in distributed systems, some protocols specify supported payload formats. These protocols express additional requirements, like message ordering, security, and guarantees for the availability of a message broker. Security should consider the channel and provide safeguards from end to end when required. The publish/subscribe model may ease the integration of heterogeneous data, but routing messages to relevant receivers does not eliminate integration challenges. The additional complexity should not be neglected. For integration both operation and design aspects must be considered. The approach fits federated scenarios, like service-oriented architectures, but is also applicable to data and systems at all levels, from project-to-project and project-to-systems integration to information from the cloud-to-the-gold.

3.4.1. Data Standards and Ontologies

A comprehensive catalog of data standards and ontologies facilitates their use in addressing specific needs, promotes notifications about missing or outdated specifications, and encourages contributions of new specifications, extensions to existing ones, and mappings. Such a catalog is especially useful for assessing the maturity, extensibility, and governance of data standards for a particular domain, and for mapping the coverage of data standards and ontologies to the requirements from different aspects of interoperability—semantic (support for shared meaning), syntactic (support for syntax, structure, and schema), and access (support for web service APIs). A catalog of data standards and ontologies relevant to data integration has recently been developed and made available. Moreover, it can be extended to cover data standards and ontologies for various additional application areas, such as geographic information, public transport, earth observation, and the IoT.

Creating a schema-free version of the catalog enables automated support for generic data retrieval queries and flexible exploration of the catalog on user-defined dimensions. The catalog thereby helps large data users identify appropriate sources and assess their properties. Future work can build on the current semantic web approach, integrate additional features such as schema-level metadata extraction and data source profiling, adapt the semantic web concept of trust to the catalog, automatically maintain the catalog knowledge base, and integrate the detailed knowledge within a broader data source discovery framework.

3.4.2. Messaging and Data Exchange Protocols

Messaging and data exchange protocols ensure the reliable, secure, and timely delivery of messages and data between software components over a network. The choice of data exchange protocol affects message payloads; but, more importantly, a data-integration approach determines data exchange mechanisms. Two classes of integration data-exchange mechanisms may be considered: integration using message-oriented middleware and integration using other generic messaging services or mechanisms, such as Internet RFCs. The choice between these two classes is determined mainly by the requirements of the integration scenario.

Messaging protocols are dedicated protocols that provide special services for enabling message-oriented communication, whereas data-exchange protocols are more generic and configurable servers with a general-purpose capability. A prominent example is the use of message-oriented middleware with publish-and-subscribe events. Message-oriented middleware commonly provides the concept of a broker that determines message request processing. When appending, each message is added to a queue for storage where it will stay until some service retrieves it. For its notification, the service describes the events to which it is subscribing, often in terms of a message meta-schema. Support for the persistence of messages is common. Ordering guarantees are also frequent: for example, first-in-first-out (FIFO) or priority orders. Sub-chat service patterns enabled by publish-and-subscribe message services are common.

RFC 5322 defines the Internet message format in use by the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP). Internet messages integrate support for ASCII text, but the message format also permits more complex media types to be used. The security framework is based on the Transmission Control Protocol, which provides guarantees of delivery, security, session establishment, and ordering. The disadvantage of using a mail messaging service is generally higher latency relative to other mechanisms. Such higher latency can adversely impact notification services that require timely delivery with bounded latencies.

3.5. Data Quality, Governance, and Compliance in Integration

Fundamental requirements of data integration include quality, governance, and compliance. Data quality is the degree to which data is fit for use. The most widely emphasized dimensions of data quality include accuracy, completeness, timeliness, consistency, validity, and uniqueness. Understanding each dimension enables organizations to not only define the quality characteristics required for specific data use cases but also define the assessment methods and data quality metrics that need to be applied. Data quality is a core consideration of data governance, as an appropriate balance of data quality helps drive desirable business objectives—such as improved decision-making and higher operational efficiency—while minimizing excessive data quality spending. Data governance frameworks define roles, structures, and policies that enable effective data stewardship and sound decision-making for data assets. Typical data stewardship roles include data owners, data custodians, business users, and data quality managers. Data governance frameworks define policies for data lifecycle management and the use of data management processes. Data governance is closely tied to data compliance, as regulatory controls are fundamentally about mitigating risk and ensuring compliance with external regulations and internal policies.

Data quality, governance, and compliance considerations apply equally to a data ecosystem and a data integration scenario, including data streams. The governance framework drives decisions about sampling, profiling, quality measurement, and the establishment of quality thresholds for the data integration processes. The service activities for ensuring data quality are also aligned with data governance and compliance policy requirements. The actual data quality management activities performed depend on the characteristics of the integration and the importance of the integrated data, for instance, data that is highly sensitive to security should be protected against data leakage during integration, while data inserted into a data warehouse for Business Intelligence needs to be as accurate as possible and also assessed with a data quality measurement strategy.

3.5.1. Data Quality Dimensions and Measurement

Data quality plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness and reliability of data integration efforts, with substantial impact on analytical and operational outcomes. Defined as the fitness of data for its intended use, data quality can be characterized using several dimensions, including accuracy, completeness, timeliness, consistency, validity, and uniqueness. Integrating data from source systems with differing capacities creates data quality challenges, with quality-dependent integration quality. Poor quality hampers decision-making and increases costs, emphasizing the necessity of measuring data quality as an initial step in an integration effort.

Measures exist for calculating specific data quality dimensions, many aligned with data quality assessment frameworks, including the Information Quality Assessment Metric, Data Quality Assessment Framework, and Data Quality Measurement Framework. Typically, however, data quality assessment may be incorporated into the root cause analysis step of the Knowledge Discovery in Databases process, or into a consistent, systematic exploration of the transdisciplinary Big Data domain. In the context of data integration or data warehousing, data quality directly influences the quality of the integrated or warehoused data. Data governance frameworks and data stewards working at the data level may track metrics directly correlated with data quality.

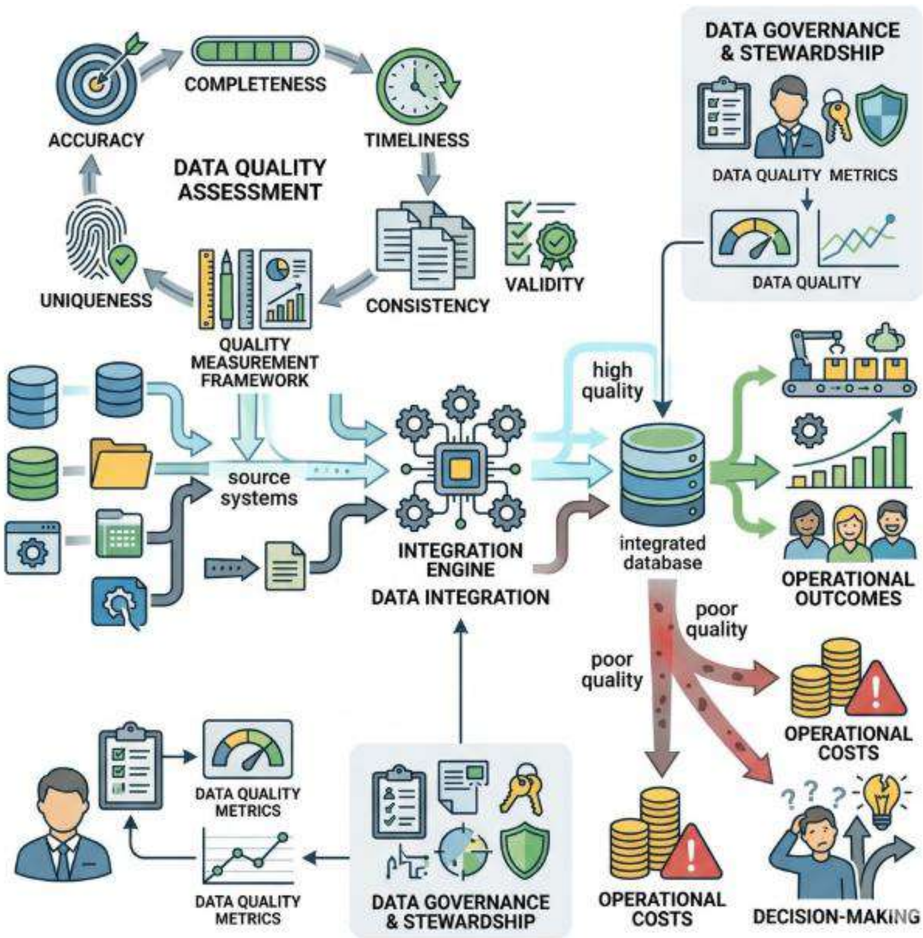

Fig 3.2: The Crucial Role of Data Quality in Integration: A Framework for Assessment, Governance, and Impact Mitigation in Analytical and Operational Systems

3.5.2. Data Governance Frameworks

Data governance encompasses the overall management of data, including its availability, usability, integrity, and security within an organization. It establishes the processes and responsibilities that govern the quality and security of the data used in an enterprise and ensures that organizations can leverage data as one of their most significant assets. Data governance provides policies for managing and protecting data and tools for monitoring compliance.

A typical framework defines policies for data, identifies data stewards responsible for data quality and usage, and establishes rules and procedures for data during its lifecycle. It usually covers data protection, data quality, regulatory compliance, data security, and data privacy. Data Quality: Data governance usually places primary importance on data quality because poor-quality data can have a negative impact on an organization's operations and can even damage its reputation. Data quality governance establishes measurement standards for data and defines the authority responsible for ensuring high data quality. Data Security: Organizations need to protect sensitive information from unexpected exposure, theft, or loss. Data governance often includes a system for evaluating sensitive data, such as personally identifiable information (PII) and intellectual property, and for implementing appropriate data protection measures. Data Compliance: Regulatory compliance, an aspect of data security, is a key driver for data governance. Data governance frameworks also create policies to ensure compliance with regulations, including GDPR. Data Policies: A data governance program involves defining and documenting data policies for various aspects of data lifecycle management. Policies about classification, usage, access, archiving, and retention are among the most common. Classification policies define categories for all data sources, determine which sources require greater levels of governance, and establish procedures for assessing new data sources. Usage policies define allowed and prohibited uses of data, while access policies specify who can access which data without special permission. Archiving policies define what to keep, how long to keep it, and archiving locations. Retention policies determine how long to keep data before destroying it.

3.6. Interoperability in Modern Data Ecosystems

Data ecosystems have evolved to support new data sources and processing techniques. On the one hand, the emergence of Big Data is leading to Integration-as-a-Service solutions leveraging the volume, velocity, and/or variety dimensions. On-Premise Data Warehousing approaches are being extended towards the cloud in the form of hybrid Deployment Models. On the other hand, the Internet of Things (IoT) is setting the stage for Edge-to-Core-to-Cloud solutions combining Service-Based Architectures for Telemetry and Monitoring with a Lower Latency Region for real-time Stream Processing. The scalability, elasticity, and on-demand pricing of the Infrastructure-as-a-

Service paradigm, together with a wide range of managed PaaS Services, are making the cloud attractive for both operational and analytical deployments.

Opportunities for risk-sharing and an Economics-of-Scale proposition are pushing organizations towards Cloud-Native Deployment Models while simultaneously increasing concerns for Data Security and Confidentiality. Despite these trends, Identity and Access Management, Data Security and Protection, and Governance remain sources of concern. New methods and techniques for Data Governance are needed to cover Cross-Cloud and Hybrid Multicloud Integrations while providing transparency and accountability for Federation, Authorization, and Audit processes.

3.6.1. Cloud-Native and Hybrid Environments

Cloud-native and hybrid data ecosystems are receiving considerable attention in both academic literature and real-world implementations. Multiple cloud service models and deployment options are available for cloud-native services. Concerns, however, remain about the security of data and data processing platforms in public clouds; the inability to easily switch between service providers; and the difficulty of moving to another cloud provider due to lock-in with proprietary APIs and data representation formats. These aspects highlight the importance of considering the requirement for portability—across on-premises, private cloud, and public cloud environments.

Many organizations are eager to adopt cloud-based services; however, enterprise data governance departments are generally cautious about making such moves, because data privacy risks associated with these services are coming under increasing scrutiny, particularly with respect to the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Key data governance-focused topics for users of cloud-native services are therefore concerned with the assurance of privacy and security of sensitive data in public cloud environments, programmatic detection of unexpected data sharing and access patterns, compliance checks for external data sources, and audit trails for data access and use. These topics and security patterns have become prime research targets.

3.6.2. Big Data, Analytics, and IoT Interoperability

Cloud-native, hybrid, and multicloud data and analytics environments require careful attention, especially concerning deployment models and as-a-service offerings. In many situations, security and governance capabilities are designed anew as part of a new partner ecosystem. The service delivery ensures that business partners and end-users will have access to the data and analytics they require. Business and information technology leaders support these processes across the organization.

Few organizations have explored in-depth the interconnectedness of business intelligence and data warehousing systems with big data systems. However, the interconnectedness cannot be taken for granted. The volume, velocity, and variety characteristics of big data systems pose significant challenges to traditional data integration techniques and technologies. Stream processing has emerged as an integrated solution that addresses some of the unique issues related to the integration of big data systems with business intelligence and data warehousing systems.

The growth of Internet of Things (IoT) technologies is driving change in the sources and volumes of data being collected and processed for analytics and business decision-making activities. It is common for organizations to use both analytical and business-intelligence systems to support decision making. Data generated by IoT devices typically have their own unique characteristics, especially in terms of delivery and delivery guarantee requirements. The concept of edge computing enables many of the functional and performance requirements for IoT integration with analytics, business-intelligence, and data-warehousing systems to be addressed.

3.7. Evaluation, Maturity, and Roadmapping

Capability maturity models for evaluating and improving data interoperability maturity across domains and platform ecosystems—cloud, big data, and IoT.

Maturity is an indicator of an organization's ability to deploy a set of processes or capabilities successfully. In this context, a maturity model defines the evolution stages of an entity's capabilities and can be used for assessment, guiding improvements, validating readiness, or setting achievement targets. For data integration, the concept can apply to an individual capability or the combination of domains and areas of technology composing a comprehensive solution.

Organizations without a capability in data integration and interoperability are becoming rare. In many cases, these capabilities emerge first in prototypes or focused use cases, later maturing into industrial-strength, trusted platforms that cover multiple requirements and drive new data economy initiatives including big data and cloud solutions. Maturity models describe these emergent trajectories, detail the stability and evolution of processes, and define the implications of achieving higher levels.

Data Integration Maturity Levels

Level 1: Ad hoc Integration—Business Units or Regions conduct point integrations between specific applications for specific purposes when it is deemed important enough. They provide no value beyond that.

Level 2: Tactical Integration—The organization recognizes the importance of data integration and has put in place personnel and technology to permit tactical integrations that are in the immediate area of interest, such as between applications that exchange data often or have a high cost of failure.

Level 3: Targeted Integration—A corps of processes, skills, methods, and reusable data assets has been created to enable focused data integration initiatives, such as Enterprise Service Bus or data warehouse feeds. These initiatives are poorly documented, can be of variable quality, and are only partially managed or controlled. Business units have been told not to build their own integrations.

Level 4: Managed Integration—An organization has a well-defined and managed capability for preparing, maintaining, and supporting an Enterprise Service Bus and data warehouse feeds, and these capabilities now support end users in many parts of the business.

Level 5: Optimizing Integration—The capability around data integration is now centered on providing a leading guidance for the deployment of Enterprise Service Bus and data integration projects to best practice standards. Regular reviews and feedback implementation.

3.7.1. Capability Maturity Models for Integration

Capability maturity models assess the capability of an organization in a specific subject area, such as data integration. They define levels of capability, for each of which specific practices are defined, and each practice includes indicators that allow the assessment of the capability level for that practice. Often, a set of improvement trajectories is suggested, indicating a set of practices to be implemented or improved to move towards higher levels of capability in the subject area.

Maturity models guide evaluations, improvement, and roadmapping in many application domains, ranging from project management to software development and service operations. Practical experience in data integration and management suggests the development of complete models for data integration, data quality, data governance, and cloud data ecosystems, as well as specific metrics for cloud-based data integration. Other practitioners have proposed models for data integration maturity assessments.

3.7.2. Assessment Methods and Metrics

Comprehensive assessment of the data integration and interoperability landscape can be accomplished through a variety of methods and metrics. Domain-specific models, such as the Smart Data Integration and Data Quality Capability Maturity Model, facilitate systematic analysis of current maturity as well as the stewardship processes and practices required to attain the next level of maturity. Other approaches evaluate data and information technology integration maturity based on changes to organizational structures or the degree of outsourcing.

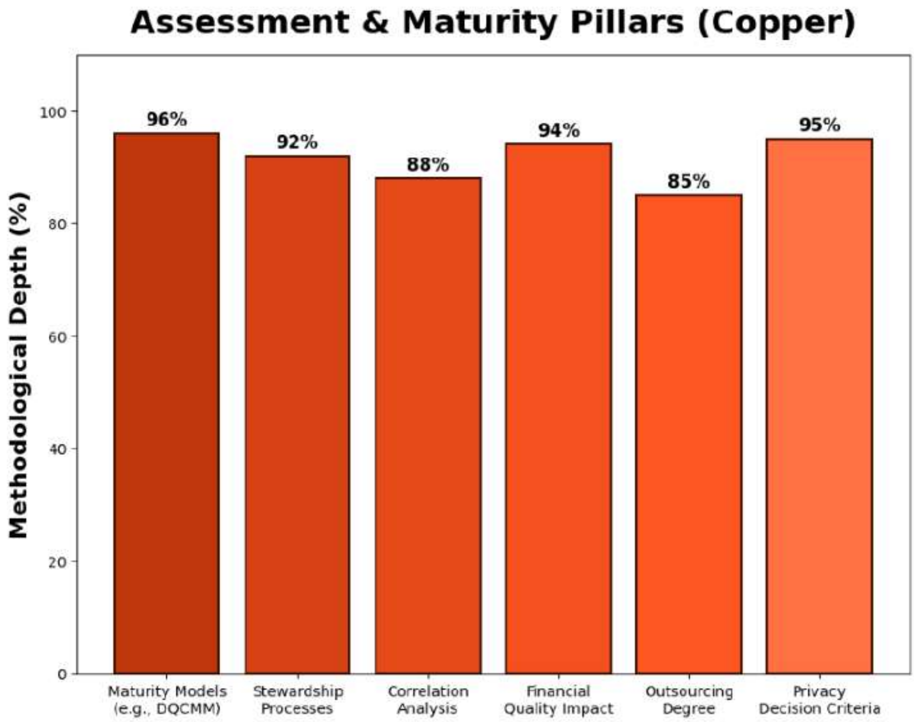

Fig 3.3: Assessment & Maturity Pillars (Copper)

Application of integrated data quality aspects across disparate systems can also be measured in financial terms. Methods for deliberating independent data quality and integration in a given system focus on correlation analysis, while pilot testing, ROI estimation, and risk assessment are applied to evaluate proposed improvements to integration. Decision criteria specific to the integration of any new technology into existing systems may encompass data privacy issues.

Whether using a maturity model or alternative method, the current level of integration effects and the desirability of further investment can be examined using a set of indicators that reflects individual technology, people, process, and governance aspects. Roadmap development can then utilize the measures of key indicators, along with the focus of planned activities, desired outcomes, resource availability, and other special considerations.

3.8. Case Studies and Applications

Real-world applications illustrate the usefulness of data integration principles and showcase progress in interoperability across specific domains. Detailed, concrete, practical examples can demonstrate the operation of the integration patterns—federation, replication, Virtualization, and distribution—that are described in abstract terms elsewhere.

To encompass all patterns, the primary example of a hybrid use case, which integrates on-premises components with devices in the cloud, is complemented with a cloud-to-cloud Data Federation counterpart. The Telehealth example emphasizes Data Federation so that an alternative domain pattern is also presented: the application domain. Progress made toward IoT Interoperability is chronicled using Rosalind Franklin Institute research as the lens.

3.9. Conclusion

Data integration is crucial for organizations seeking to improve decision-making and increase efficiency. Communication and collaboration among internal teams and external partners can be significantly enhanced through an effective data integration framework. The practical implementation of a data integration solution, along with the corresponding proposal for a data department, will have a positive impact on data-centered projects in the coming years.

The notion of integration has become associated with various tasks, including the extraction and consolidation of data for reporting purposes, data warehousing, data replication, and data migration. Integration implements the means by which exchanges are made; thus, a common interpretation of integration—as in the pooling of data from various sources—has emerged. However, at its core, integration comprises two major ideas: It provides a cohesive product to an external party, and integration hides, reduces, or simplifies the set of functions exposed by the initiator (for example, a company, a government, or a group). External elements are a crucial aspect of any organization's decision-making process. Organizations deal with many external parties in their day-to-day activities: suppliers, partners, financial institutions, clients, agencies, and other governments.

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