SENG3011 - Y_2 - D2 Report

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Contents

API Design Details
API Implementation

API Design Details

From an architectural standpoint, the goal was to harness the power of managed public cloud services to build an API which is lightweight, fully managed and performant. To do this, a microservices architecture along with server-less computing and GraphQL was used to architect a solution which is decoupled, fully modularised and fully programmable.

Design Decisions

- Database
 - Choice
 - The choice of database is crucial for any API since it governs how data is stored, aggregated and queried in the back-end. By opting for a NoSQL database, ease of development is improved, as a schema is not required. Moreover, the scraper parses data into the known format of articles and reports in json, which directly map to a simple object store. This way, time is not wasted creating/querying/updating tables, as once an article or report structure is generated as a python dictionary, a simple json.dumps() can be executed to convert into json and directly put into the NoSQL database. Given the ease of integration when remaining AWS-native, **DynamoDB** seemed like a natural choice for a fully managed NoSQL database. The boto3 python sdk for AWS makes programmatic access to DynamoDB simple, with easy API calls such as put_item().
 - Advantages
 - Fully managed service no setup/maintenance required
 - No schema required
 - No parsing of data into tables
 - No knowledge of SQL required
 - Disadvantages
 - Inefficient querying
 - Challenges and findings
 - This is the first time using DynamoDB in a large scale project, and it has quite a lot of functionality which can be difficult to initially digest. For example, you can only query on primary-key, requiring the use of "Global Secondary Indexes" for more complex queries. As a workaround, querying on object attributes can be achieved with the Scan() boto3 API call, with a FilterExpression defined on an attribute. This works, however it is obviously inefficient since every Scan() operation

involves going over the entire table, making it unsuitable for larger data-sets. This can be seen in the following example:

```
table_reports.scan(FilterExpression=Attr("event_date").eq(date))
```

where event_date is an object attribute to be filtered on, and table_reports is the table containing all disease reports.

• Compute

- Choice
 - Choosing compute can be at-times difficult, since it may involve setup, maintenance and extra cost. The decision to go server-less was motivated by the desire to abstract away as much responsibility/management of compute/networking infrastructure, allowing time to be maximised spent on writing code and not maintaining server infrastructure. AWS Lambda is an excellent server-less function-as-a-service compute option, which allows code to be directly run on an endpoint. It is then billed according to execution time i.e when the endpoint is actually hit, not for every second it is 'up' in the case of a traditional server. Moreover, the ability to attach Lambda functions as resolvers to the AWS AppSync API made developing the core API functionality very easy. Queries to the API endpoint invoke a single GraphQL query, which has a single Lambda function attached to it as a resolver (back-end).
 - Advantages
 - Speed of development
 - Cost efficiency
 - Seamless integration with other AWS services, particularly AppSync
 - No management of server infrastructure required at all pure code
 - Disadvantages
 - Somewhat annoying debugging
- Challenges and findings
 - Debugging is obviously not as easy as it would be when running code on a server, since there is no local machine or environment. However, Amazon CloudWatch Events logs all executions of a Lambda, making for some kind of debugging if required.
 - Unclear documentation at times made for frustrating debugging i.e whether or not the event_handler python Lambda function is intended to return json or python object, or how the input parameters are stored in the event and context objects passed to the event_handler function as arguments when the Lambda is invoked.

Back-end

- Choice
 - As outlined in the D1 report, Golang was to be the programming language of choice for how the API back-end was implemented, however python3 was opted for in the end due to ease of development. The majority of group members are unfamiliar with Golang, therefore making its use unsuitable. I would still however like to re-implement the Lambda function that exists in Golang using the AWS sdkfor-go.
 - Advantages

- Well-known and easy to develop in
- boto3's popularity for developing using AWS makes for many blogs, stackoverflow threads, documentation and general support for different usecases/issues
- Disadvantages
 - Dynamically typed and interpreted makes for run-time errors which would otherwise be caught by a compiled language such as Golang
 - Vastly slower than a compiled language such as Golang
- Challenges and findings
 - All in all a good choice given the power of boto3, however performance could be vastly optimised using Golang.

Framework

- Choice
 - GraphQL is a natural choice for this project, as it allows for queries to be defined on a set of types, which is useful given the known data format of articles and reports. Since the data format for how things like articles and reports is specified in the spec, it makes defining a GraphQL schema simple. AWS AppSync is a fully managed GraphQL service, completed with a querying tool in browser and an IDE for the schema and resolvers.
 - Advantages
 - Eliminates over-fetching or under-fetching problems thereby reducing network overhead
 - Reduced complexity in front-end development the development
 - AWS-native with seamless integration with AWS Lambda
 - Fully managed service endpoint is setup and deployed already with customisable authentication - no code required for this
 - Write richer gueries
 - Disadvantages
 - Added complexity in setting up a schema
- Challenges and findings
 - AWS AppSync can be quite difficult to work with. Built-in resolver functions for queries on your schema are defined in VTL (Apache Velocity Templating Language) which is very complicated. Only until we figured out how to attach a Lambda function as a query resolver could we then begin debugging and testing the actual GraphQL endpoint. After this initial learning curve however things became more efficient, as doing things such as changing response content/fields was as easy as changing the return statement in the Lambda function, and then modifying the GraphQL schema accordingly. Also generating a schema from a DynamoDB table may seem like an easy option, but results in a range of types, mutations and queries being defined in your schema which are difficult to understand. This aspect of AppSync and GraphQL in general is the main drawback learning and working with this idea of a schema and queries defined on types within the schema.

• Machine Learning

- Choice
 - Given that fields such as diseases and syndromes can be fairly easily extracted from a given article main_text, NLP only really needs to be utilised for labelling other entities, such as dates and locations. Ideally, an intelligent model would actually distinguish between the mentioning of the disease in an article and

the actual outbreak/reporting of one, as well as group different occurrences of diseases as different reports within the same article. This is all rather difficult however, so is left as an exercise beyond this milestone, perhaps with the use of Amazon SageMaker and other Machine Learning services. Amazon Comprehend however can be quite effectively utilised for entity classification. This is done using the 'real-time-analysis' feature, which given an input text generates an entity report, labelling different words into types. A sample output of a entity report returned by Comprehend can be shown below:

```
{
"Entities": [
    "Score": 0.9985879063606262,
    "Type": "ORGANIZATION",
    "Text": "INOVIO",
    "BeginOffset": 23,
    "EndOffset": 29
},
{
    "Score": 0.9479143619537354,
    "Type": "LOCATION",
    "Text": "Ghana",
    "BeginOffset": 45,
   "EndOffset": 62
},
. . .
```

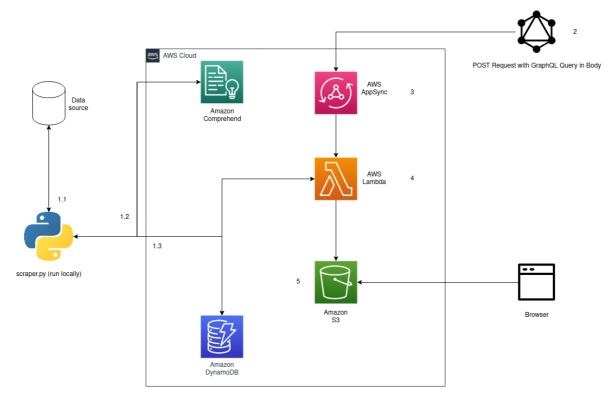
The "Score" indicates Comprehend's confidence in a particular classification, which is useful as we can sort by this field when generate reports to get the "highest confidence" location.

- Advantages
 - Easy API call through boto3
 - Surprisingly cost efficient free tier available for Amazon Comprehend
- Disadvantages
 - Not yet very accurate
- Challenges and findings
 - Comprehend also gives the ability to train custom classifiers, which we attempted with a list of 1000 diseases. The results were not satisfactory however, so I will be trying with a larger data-set of 17000 diseases which I found, along with a larger input text (validation data set). This also may however prove to incur cost.
- Tooling/DevOps/Misc
 - Amazon S3 was used for simple storage, i.e writing API call output files to a publically
 accessible bucket. I then inserted an <u>index.html</u> containing javascript which along with
 a permissive policy on the bucket, as well as a CORS policy makes for a website
 (directory listing) for the bucket.
 - Postman was used to document and test the API, creating a shareable Collection complete with a test suite and clear layout. This is fantastic as running the Collection can be automated, allowing for this to be injected into a CI/CD pipeline such as Travis CI or Jenkins, perhaps prior to a deployment stage. I would like to explore this, and CI/CD for Lambda in general, as this would make further streamline the Lambda development process.

API Implementation

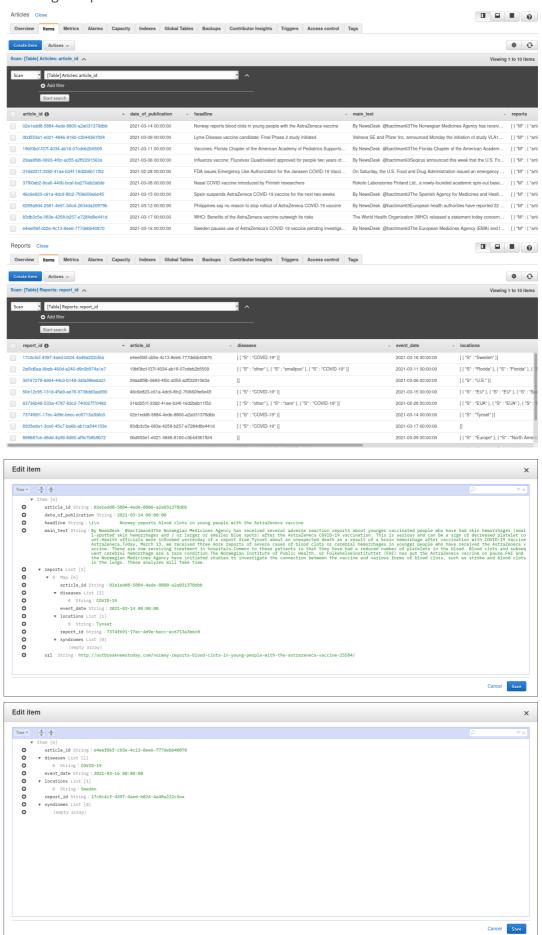
Architecture and implementation details

Our API utilises a broad range of managed services on Amazon Web Services to build an endpoint which can be queried after the scraper program is run. The flow can be summarised as such:



- 1. The initially flow on the left details how the database is intialised to be gueried by the API.
 - 1. Run scraper.py. Currently this is done locally with python3 scraper.py but in the future will sit in it's own AWS Lambda function with a CloudWatch Events Rate Expression such as rate(1 day) which will invoke the Lambda function every day. The scraper scrapes the given data source of http://outbreaknewstoday.com/. Using the BeautifulSoup library, article objects are generated as python dictionaries in the desired format, with fields such as date_of_publication, headline and so forth being populated. In addition to these fields, we also add an article-id which is a uniquely generated unid from a unid4() call. Reports are stored as a children objects under the key reports in an article, with each report containing it's own unique report-id as well as the article-id of it's parent article.
 - 2. The scraper then begins to intelligently generate disease reports. This involves querying AWS's managed Natural Language Processing Service **Amazon Comprehend**. This and all programmatic access to AWS resources is done through the AWS python SDK **boto3**. The API call to the <u>DetectEntities</u> endpoint sends the <u>main_text</u> of a given <u>article</u> in the request, and returns a list of classified entities sorted by type and score (confidence) that the Amazon Comprehend real-time-analysis found in the article. From this, fields such as <u>location</u> in a report can be populated.
 - 3. The article object is now fully populated, complete with children report objects. This is then serialized into json with json.dumps() and then written to the Articles table in DynamoDB, with reports also being written but to a separate Reports table. Below are screenshots of both tables as well as sample objects within them. Note the article-id

field present in every report, associating it with it's parent report for retrieval when resolving a request.



- 2. Now that the DynamoDB table is populated, a user can now query the API endpoint to make a request. To resolve requests to the endpoint, we have described a single GraphQL query type called <code>getArticles()</code>, which takes in a combination of <code>period_of_interest</code>, <code>location</code> and <code>key_terms</code>. Currently, the API only supports date ranges and not singular/exact dates. <code>period_of_interest</code> is a required parameter, but <code>location</code> and <code>key_terms</code> are not.
- 3. Below is the GraphQL schema defining the various types and queries.

```
type Articles {
   url: String!
   headline: String!
   main_text: String!
   reports: [Reports]!
   article_id: String!
   date_of_publication: String!
type Mutation {
   putArticle(url: String!, headline: String!): Articles
type Query {
   getArticles(period_of_interest: String, key_terms: String, location:
String): Response!
type Reports {
   article_id: String!
   report_id: String!
   diseases: [String]!
   syndromes: [String]!
   locations: [String]!
   event_date: String!
}
type Response {
  body: [Articles]
   statusCode: Int!
   statusMessage: String!
}
type Schema {
   query: Query
   mutation: Mutation
```

putArticle() is on defined as a placeholder since the API currently has no mutation/write requirements. Across the whole schema! denotes compulsory for a field or parameter. As seen in the <code>getArticles()</code> definition, none of the input fields are compulsory as parameters, as this logic is handled by the back-end. This is because making query parameters required results in poor error messages being sent to the user upon a request where a required parameter is not given. The <code>Reponse</code> type is defined for easy return

statements in the Lambda function resolver, with the <code>body</code> field being a nested type containing a list of <code>Articles</code>. This maps very nicely to python as evident in the <code>lambda.py</code> source-code where return statements are simply:

```
return {
    "body": results,
    "statusCode": 200,
    "statusMessage": "Query successful."
}
```

For error responses or responses with no body, body can simply be left empty or not at all returned:

```
return {
    "statusCode": 200,
    "statusMessage": "No articles matching the given query."
}
```

This seamless integration of services is extremely powerful and a main advantage of using GraphQL and particularly AWS AppSync. All data from the scraper, to the database, and finally to the GraphQL schema/Lambda function are serialized in the exact same way.

All endpoints are POST, with the user inputting the GraphQL query in the body of the request. After specifying the input parameters in the query, the user can choose to specify which fields it wishes to retrieve, whether that is all of them:

```
query {
 getArticles(key_terms: "COVID-19", location: "United States",
period_of_interest: "2021-01-01 17:00:xx to 2021-03-22 00:00:00") {
   statusMessage
   body {
     article_id
     date_of_publication
     main text
     headline
     url
     reports {
       article_id
       event date
       diseases
       locations
       report_id
       syndromes
   statusCode
```

```
"data": {
    "getArticles": {
        "statusMessage": "Query successful",
```

```
"body": [
                                         "article_id": "316d251f-3392-41ae-b34f-16d2b6b11f52",
                                         "date_of_publication": "2021-02-28 00:00:00",
                                         "main_text": "On Saturday, the U.S. Food and Drug
Administration issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the third
vaccine for the prevention of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by
severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The EUA allows
the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine to be distributed in the U.S for use in
individuals 18 years of age and older. "The authorization of this vaccine
expands the availability of vaccines, the best medical prevention method for
COVID-19, to help us in the fight against this pandemic, which has claimed
over half a million lives in the United States," said Acting FDA Commissioner
Janet Woodcock, M.D. "The FDA, through our open and transparent scientific
review process, has now authorized three COVID-19 vaccines with the urgency
called for during this pandemic, using the agency's rigorous standards for
safety, effectiveness and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency
use eporting System (VAERS) for Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine: serious adverse
events, cases of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome and cases of COVID-19 that
result in hospitalization or death.....,
                                         "headline": "\r\n
                                                                                            FDA issues Emergency Use
Authorization for the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine, the 3rd to date
                                         "url": "http://outbreaknewstoday.com/fda-issues-
\verb|emergency-use-authorization-for-the-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lemergency-use-authorization-for-the-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lemergency-use-authorization-for-the-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lemergency-use-authorization-for-the-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lemergency-use-authorization-for-the-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lemergency-use-authorization-for-the-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lemergency-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorization-for-the-jans-use-authorizat
76713/",
                                         "reports": [
                                                {
                                                          "article_id": "316d251f-3392-41ae-b34f-
16d2b6b11f52",
                                                          "event_date": "2021-02-28 00:00:00",
                                                          "diseases": [
                                                                 "other",
                                                                  "sars",
                                                                 "COVID-19"
                                                          "locations": [
                                                                 "EUA",
                                                                  "EUA",
                                                                 "Mexico",
                                                                 "U.S",
                                                                 "U.S.",
                                                                  "U.S.",
                                                                  "United States",
                                                                 "Mexico",
                                                                  "South America",
                                                                  "South America",
                                                                  "South Africa",
                                                                  "South Africa"
                                                         ],
                                                          "report_id": "63736b48-533a-4787-83c3-
740027f70482",
                                                          "syndromes": [
                                                                 "Acute respiratory syndrome"
                                                }
                                       ]
                        ],
```

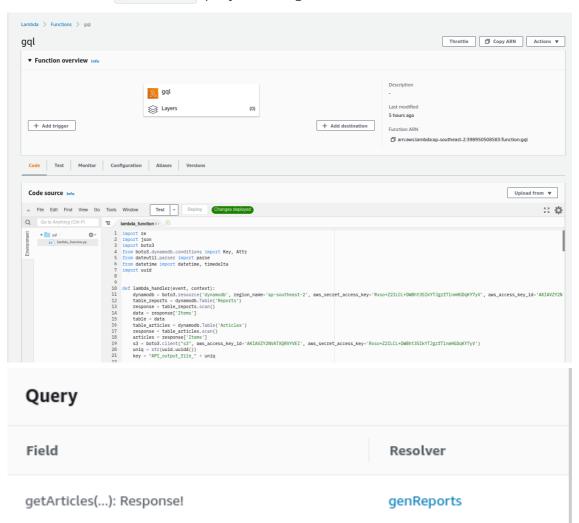
```
"statusCode": 200
}
}
}
```

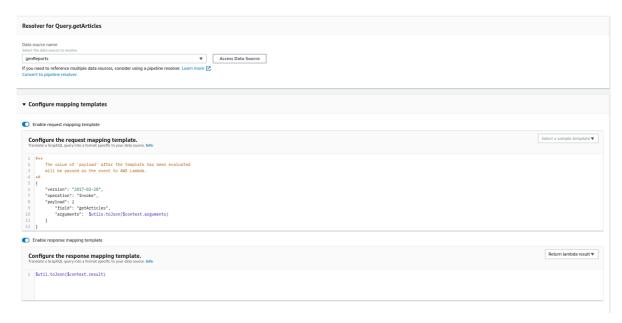
or simply a few:

```
query {
   getArticles(key_terms: "COVID-19", location: "United States",
   period_of_interest: "2021-01-01 17:00:xx to 2021-03-22 00:00:00") {
    statusMessage
   body {
      date_of_publication
      headline
      url
      reports {
      event_date
      diseases
      locations
      }
   }
   statusCode
}
```

```
"data": {
                                   "getArticles": {
                                                     "statusMessage": "Query successful",
                                                     "body": [
                                                                   {
                                                                                        "date_of_publication": "2021-02-28 00:00:00",
                                                                                        "headline": "\r\n
                                                                                                                                                                                              FDA issues Emergency Use
Authorization for the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine, the 3rd to date ",
                                                                                        "url": "http://outbreaknewstoday.com/fda-issues-
\verb|emergency-use-authorization-for-the-janssen-covid-19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lements | 19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-lements | 19-vaccine-the-3rd-to-date-leme
76713/",
                                                                                        "reports": [
                                                                                                      {
                                                                                                                           "event_date": "2021-02-28 00:00:00",
                                                                                                                            "diseases": [
                                                                                                                                             "other",
                                                                                                                                            "sars",
                                                                                                                                            "COVID-19"
                                                                                                                           ],
                                                                                                                            "locations": [
                                                                                                                                            "EUA",
                                                                                                                                            "EUA",
                                                                                                                                            "Mexico",
                                                                                                                                            "U.S",
                                                                                                                                            "U.S.",
                                                                                                                                             "U.S.",
                                                                                                                                            "United States",
                                                                                                                                             "Mexico",
                                                                                                                                             "South America",
                                                                                                                                             "South America",
```

The resolver Lambda function "gql" is shown below on the console, as well as how it is "attached" to the <code>getArticles</code> query and configured in VTL to return data.





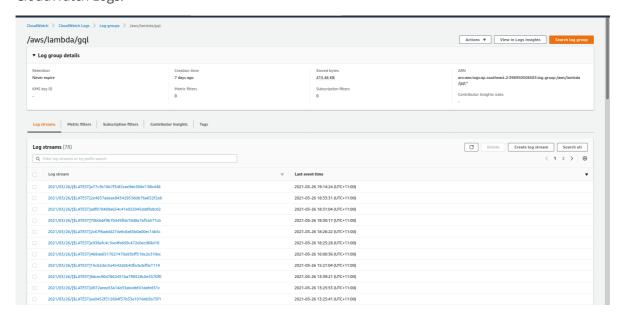
4. The "gql" Lambda function can now resolve the the request. The lambda_handler(event,context) function is passed the query parameters in the event
object as such:

```
{
    'field': 'getArticles',
    'arguments': {
        'period_of_interest': ['2021-01-01 17:00:xx to 2021-03-22 00:00:00'],
        'key_terms': 'COVID-19, sars',
        'location': 'Sweden'
    }
}
```

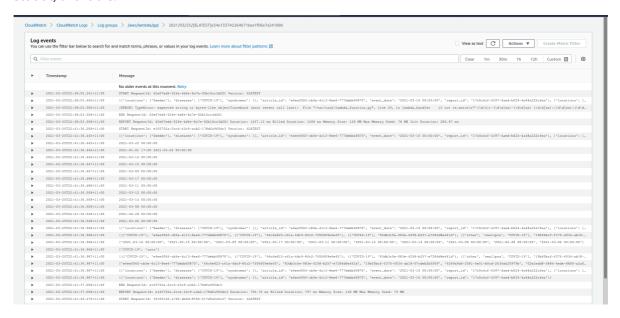
So query parameters like <code>location</code> can be accessed as such: <code>event['arguments']</code> ['location']. The code then retrieves all entries in the <code>Reports</code> DynamoDB table. Then, it filters this table first by <code>period_of_interest</code>, then by <code>key_terms</code> or <code>location</code> depending on whether they are provided or not. This is done through various list comprehensions, minimising the number of queries made to the DynamoDB table, given that filtering on attributes like this:

expensive as it scans through the entire table. The results are returned in the previously specified format, with error messages for incorrectly formatted inputs (e.g bad date range) or no results for the given query. This is detailed in the Postman Collection tests as API Documentation. Prior to returning the response message to the AppSync endpoint, the Lambda function will write the response message to a publicly accessible s3 bucket at https://y-2.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/index.html, appending a unique https://y-2.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/index.html, appending a sunique <a href="https://

Logs for the Lambda function's execution (for debugging purposes) can be viewed in CloudWatch Logs:



With data such as execution time, input parameters and debug output (e.g things from stdout) available:



5. Finally, the output files from API calls are available on a publicly accessible s3 bucket at https://y-2.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/index.html, which contains an index.html file serves a simple directory listing of the bucket's contents.